

VITAMIN OR POISON?: *WASTA* AND POLITICS IN JORDAN

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Relations between Arab citizens and their governments are often mediated by the practice of *wasta*, an Arabic term that involves favoritism, patronage, influence, clientelism, nepotism, and similar social issues. Arabs report they must use *wasta* in any number of interactions, from getting a job to cutting through bureaucratic red tape. Up until this point, the literature on *wasta* has found little agreement as to whether *wasta* is, in fact, a form of corruption. In this project, I argue that while *wasta* may “work” on the small scale, binding together groups, providing material benefits, and keeping patrons in power, it has a negative impact on citizen attitudes toward politics and governance in three areas: belief in political agency, assessment of political leaders and institutions, and opinions on the likelihood of meaningful political reform. Thus, on a large scale, *wasta* has a detrimental impact on Jordan’s political culture. Using data from the Arab Barometer survey, forty-seven interviews, and a novel public opinion collection tool called FADFED, I analyze the case of Jordan in order to analyze this hypothesis.

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Dedication

To Dozan wa Awtar.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivation

On November 5, 2015, it rained in Amman. For about an hour, a deluge of rain soaked a city accustomed to small amounts of rain in the winter, but not such a great deal at one time. Cars were abandoned in tunnels that cross underneath the city's many traffic circles, classes at the country's largest university were canceled as students and faculty fled to higher ground, and residents in low-lying areas faced water cascading into their homes. In the end, four people died and more were left homeless when storm drains (what few the city has) failed to take in water and the hard desert ground refused to absorb so much water so quickly. The flooding damaged more than five hundred businesses and caused an estimated \$6.5 million in damages. Newspapers and television shows proclaimed: "Amman drowns."

In the days following the flooding, journalists and citizens alike sought to understand why the city was so unprepared for under an hour of torrential rain. Government leaders blamed Amman's archaic infrastructure, the city's terrain (like Rome, Amman was built on seven hills), or the historic amount of rain. The Mayor of Amman, Aqel Biltaji, and other city officials absolved themselves of any responsibility. In a particularly ugly incident that caused a great deal of uproar, Minister of Social Development Reem Abu Hassan visited homes that were damaged and commented, "Who told you to live in a basement

apartment?”¹ In fact, basement apartments are normally the domain of the poorest families in Amman, often Egyptians who help to manage apartment buildings, called a “guard,” or *haris* in Arabic. Families living in basement apartments normally do so because they have to, not because they choose to do so. (Indeed, two of the four people who died were children of an Egyptian *haris* living in a basement apartment.)

The minister’s callous comments only underscored the lack of accountability that accompanied the storm response. The questions that citizens and commentators asked largely went unanswered, and not one official put forth a proposal to fix the old and inadequate infrastructure they kept blaming for the catastrophe. Despite images of Civil Defense Directorate rescue workers needing to use SCUBA equipment in the center of a major world city, no blue ribbon commission was formed to get to the roots of the problem. Journalists complained in newspapers, on television, and in blogs, to no avail. No one lost their job or issued an apology. Angry citizens had no means of holding their leaders responsible. Naseem Tarawneh, who manages the Black Iris blog and is often critical of Jordan’s leaders, pointed to a lack of empathy, and an “othering,” that has developed between leaders and the people they are supposed to serve.²

It is this disconnect between Arab citizens and their leaders, and the nearly complete absence of accountability in Middle East politics, that has inspired my research. The Arab Spring uprisings and protests, which began early in my graduate career, were far from the first time Arab citizens had vented their frustration in public. Their scope and scale, however, and their success in toppling corrupt and ineffective public figures, was unprecedented in recent memory. Regimes around the region responded to the protest movements

¹ Ammon News (2015, November 6). “Wazīr l-muāṭan: mīn qultlak taskun fī al-ṭābqat al-saflī?” *Ammon News*. Retrieved December 7, 2015 from <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articulo=248182>

²Tarawneh, N. (2015, November 8). “The Socioeconomics of Bad Weather in Jordan.” *The Black Iris*. Retrieved December 7, 2015 from <http://black-iris.com/2015/11/08/the-socioeconomics-of-bad-weather-in-jordan/>

by writing new constitutions, calling new elections, replacing ministers, promising slates of reforms to promote transparency and accountability, or a combination of the above. Jordan's King Abdullah II cycled through five prime ministers in two years in the wake of Jordan's protests, and unveiled an extensive vision for political reform. (I will discuss this reform vision, and its implementation thus far, in Chapter 5.)

Five years into the "Arab Spring," the calls of protesters have mostly subsided. Syria is mired in civil war, and along with Iraq suffers from serious internal division and the threat of complete state collapse at the hands of various competing militias and terrorist groups. Such state collapse has already happened in Libya. Bahrain's protests were brutally put down by the Saudi military, and the Gulf has remained mostly calm subsequently. Egypt has settled into a renewed authoritarianism presided over by the country's military, with members of its largest opposition movement killed, driven into hiding, or driven from the country entirely. Even in Tunisia, normally considered the region's one success story, terrorist attacks and inter-party squabbles threaten the country's fragile stability. In Jordan, protests in 2011 and 2012 led to new government leadership and the promises of reform, but real progress has been slow in coming, as I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5.

It would be easy to pronounce the region's popular uprising dead at this point, but the evidence points to a more complicated answer. According to survey data, it is clear that dissatisfaction remains widespread among citizens in the region. In the most recent wave of the Arab Barometer survey, 54% of respondents across twelve Arab countries said they do not trust their government and only 24% rate their parliament's effectiveness as "good" or "very good." In addition, 56% of respondents reported that they do not need to support the government if they disagree with the government's decisions. 46% of respondents regard the state of democracy and human rights in their country as "bad" or "very bad," while only 32% regard them as "good" or "very good." On a scale of 1-10,

67% of respondents rate their satisfaction with their government's performance as a "5" or lower, with fully 20% reporting that they are "completely unsatisfied" by awarding the government's performance a "0."³

1.2 Fundamental Questions

In this dissertation, I explore the reasons for this dissatisfaction in greater depth. I seek to understand the enduring, structural problems with Arab governance that may be leading to social tension and unrest. Why do citizens in Jordan engage in politics or opt to disengage? How do they form assessments of their political leaders and the overall political system? What drives their beliefs about their country's present and future? I examine these questions by going to the source: the Jordanian people themselves. In particular, I focus on young Jordanians. Jordanians between 18 and 35 form an enormous percentage of Jordan's population and they face the Kingdom's tensions in an especially acute way, both practically and ideologically. Practically, most are in the process of starting a career and a life of their own in a difficult economic and security climate. Ideologically, this generation has lived through the tumult of the Arab Spring and finds itself in an era of unprecedented connectedness to others by outlets such as social media, smart phones, and satellite television news.

In this project, the concept of *wasta* plays a central role. *Wasta*, which I define in great detail in Chapter 2, is the practice of using networks of connections and influence in order to accomplish an almost unlimited variety of tasks that are necessary in daily life. A Jordanian trying to get a civil service job, an Emirati hoping for a place at a good university, an Omani looking to get medical care from a decent hospital, a Palestinian who

³Arab Barometer III. (2014). Arab Barometer Project. Retrieved December 7, 2015 from <http://www.arabbarometer.org/content/arab-barometer-iii-0>

needs the police to respond to a crime: all of these, and many more, may find themselves needing to call upon someone high up in their family or tribe to leverage government officials. Some of these individuals might deserve the benefits they are seeking, and some may not; the Jordanian may not as qualified for that job as other candidates, for example, but might get it anyway because he had someone in a high position vouch for him.

I seek to understand in this dissertation how *wasta* shapes Jordanian political attitudes. I will use both quantitative data from the Arab Spring and interviews conducted in Jordan to this end. My quantitative survey data will explore the correlation between perceived amount of *wasta* and political attitudes in three dimensions: the individual citizen as political actor, assessments of political institutions, and optimism or pessimism that the Jordanian government is currently on a path to meaningful political reform as Jordan's leaders have promised. My qualitative interview data will seek to add causal depth to these correlations by examining the thought processes by which Jordanians understand their political system and their individual role in it.

1.3 Organization of the Dissertation

Moving forward, I will lay out the case for studying *wasta* in greater detail. In Chapter 2, I define the phenomenon of *wasta* and discuss the research that has studied *wasta* so far. I then propose that *wasta* and patronage politics may appear to “work” in the short term and on a small scale, but they are detrimental to the health of the polity as a whole. I outline a methodology of both survey research and interviews, as well as a novel means of collecting public opinion data that an Amman-based NGO has developed. I also explain the reasons that make Jordan a strong case for the study of *wasta* and politics.

In Chapter 3, I present survey data that supports my hypothesis. I use data from the Arab Barometer's second (2010-2012) and third (2013-2014) waves to construct a series

of statistical regression models. These models examine the opinions of Jordanian citizens about the prevalence of *wasta*, and whether the belief that *wasta* is necessary to obtain jobs is correlated with views on politics. I show that there is, in fact, an inverse correlation between attitudes on the prevalence of *wasta* and the three key political variables that make up my hypothesis: the citizens as political actor, assessment of the effectiveness of political institutions, and the potential for political reform. I further provide a series of marginal effects models that illustrate the substantive significance of these findings.

I then seek to complement these statistical findings with qualitative research. In Chapter 4, I describe the findings of my nine months of fieldwork in Jordan. First, I outline the results of forty-six interviews with Jordanian young people (aged 18-35) on the subject of *wasta* in their daily lives and the ways it impacts both their political participation and their assessments of political institutions. Second, I discuss a novel method of public opinion data gathering, called FADFED, which I worked closely with the Leaders of Tomorrow organization in Amman to implement and analyze. Third, I analyze the findings of this qualitative research along three key themes: the role of *wasta* in forming political identity and citizenship, *wasta* as it relates to the younger generations of Jordanians in particular, and the role of *wasta* in leading to calls for greater fairness, accountability, and meritocracy in government.

In Chapter 5, I move into the theme of political reform. I first lay out in some detail King Abdullah II's reform vision, which he gave in a series of discussion papers in response to the outbreak of protests and tension during the early Arab Spring period. Next, I examine the findings of my interview research that relate to the King's reform visions. I find that citizens agree broadly on the need for significant reforms, but remain deeply skeptical that reforms are happening, or that they are possible or likely in the future. Next, I outline the Kingdom's current progress towards political reform; I discuss an interview with a

representative of the Royal Hashemite Court seeking an update on reforms, I describe the National Integrity System that the Kingdom has implemented as a result of the king's reform vision, and I note that tangible progress has occurred since early 2015 in the form of legislation aimed at strengthening political parties and the electoral process, as well as decentralizing power to Jordan's twelve governorates. Finally, I analyze the progress of reforms in light of the overall reform vision and the interview data I collected.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the implications and broader context of this dissertation effort. Beyond its addition to the literature on *wasta*, I examine three areas of research and policy to which this research contributes: broader Middle East politics, clientelism, and corruption. First, I situate the discussion of *wasta* within the context of recent developments in the politics of the Arab region. Second, I argue that this dissertation raises the need for greater attention on client demands in a clientelism literature that has often focused on patron needs and strategies. Further, the unique dynamics of tribal clientelism in Jordan draws attention to the need of clientelism researchers to appreciate the ways that clientelism and patronage may be mediated by forces other than party systems. Both of these contributions highlights the need of clientelism researchers to better understand the political context of clientelism, and the political forces that surround the system, rather than taking political institutions as a given. Finally, I note the contribution of my research to the study of corruption in two primary areas: the role of meritocracy in mitigating against corruption, and the perception of corruption among citizens.

Chapter 2

Studying *Wasta*: Theory, Hypothesis, and Methods

The concept of *wasta* impacts the life of every Jordanian. However, thus far *wasta*'s role in shaping attitudes toward citizenship, political institutions, and the future of one's country have not been adequately understood. In this chapter, I will first define *wasta* and outline the current state of research on the topic. I will argue that researchers must examine *wasta* as a political phenomenon in order to understand its impact on citizens, and the prospects for *wasta* to remain a sustainable social institution or to change in fundamental ways. Finally, I will outline my research methodology and address the theoretical and practical implications of the research project I am about to discuss in the coming chapters.

2.1 Background: Jordan's Political System

Jordan is a hereditary monarchy led since 1999 by King Abdullah II. His great-grandfather, King Abdullah I, was installed as emir of Transjordan by the British as a reward for his family's leadership of the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Upon its independence in 1946, the country was renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, after the ruling Hashemite family. Jordan's legislative branch is the National Assembly, composed of two chambers: the 150-member Chamber of Deputies, which is elected, and the 75-member Senate, which the king appoints. Members of the Chamber of Deputies are selected from multi-member districts in a majoritarian electoral system that

also includes quotas for women, Christians, Circassians, and Chechens. The Chamber of Deputies is led by the Cabinet, which is appointed by the king, who may dissolve parliament or dismiss ministers at his own discretion.

Historically, Jordan's party system has been weak, and most parliamentarians are independent of any party affiliation. In the current parliament, 27 of the 150 seats were reserved for representatives of political parties; however, only one party has more than two members in the Chamber of Deputies. Jordan's largest party, the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Islamic Action Front (IAF), has boycotted many parliamentary elections, including the most recent two elections in 2010 and 2013. The IAF charges that the electoral system was intentionally stacked against political parties after the IAF did very well in the 1989 elections, and instead encourages voting according to traditional, tribal identities. I will discuss in later chapters proposals by King Abdullah II to encourage political parties and the introduction of national policy platforms.

The process of legislation and policy formation in Jordan is heavily dominated by the Cabinet. In practice, the prime minister dictates the Chamber's agenda and employs heavy control over debate and voting practices in conjunction with the Speaker of the House. The Senate must agree to all legislation, and the king must sign any bills that are passed before they become law. Because the Cabinet and Senate are all appointed by the king, the process is usually quite streamlined, amid frequent complaints from opposition figures among the Deputies that their input is not being adequately considered. Parliament is occasionally a site of organized dissent, particularly on matters relating to Jordan's relations with Israel, but the Deputies can rarely force the Cabinet to change the course of legislation it has already laid out, beyond the addition of amendments to bills. As I will discuss in much detail, the weakness of parliament helps contribute to the focus of Deputies on patronage politics rather than programmatic policies.

2.2 What is *Wasta*?

When Arabs reference *wasta*, they ordinarily mean the use of connections in order to get something done. Someone who “has *wasta*” either has a degree of influence, or has access to those who do. A Jordanian might seek out someone with influence (who is, somewhat confusingly, normally called “a *wasta*”) in order to find a job, secure a place at a university, or navigate the bureaucratic red tape that is so common in Jordan. *Wasta* impacts nearly every facet of a Jordanian’s life, and is a common source of discussion, and complaints, among Jordanians.

As such a broad concept, *wasta* is difficult to define precisely. It involves concepts such as favoritism, patronage, tribalism, clientelism, nepotism, and corruption, but none of these can by itself sum up *wasta*. The small academic literature on *wasta* tends to prefer “favoritism,” but this translation captures only the recent development of *wasta*: the word in Arabic comes from the root “to connect or bring together,” an allusion to *wasta*’s original use as a form of tribal conflict mediation, which I detail below when I discuss *wasta*’s history. Recent contributions by Lust (2009) and Lust, Hourani, and Al Momani (2011) deal with *wasta* as a form of clientelism. However, they focus narrowly on the electoral role of *wasta* only. (I will explore in greater detail below the consequences of conceptualizing *wasta* as a form of clientelism, which forms an important element of my own analysis.) Jordanians themselves often use the term “nepotism” to describe *wasta* in English, but this, too, is incomplete because obtaining jobs is only one possible use of *wasta*.

In this dissertation, I will use the following definition for *wasta*: *Wasta* is a political institution defined by an iterated relationship of exchange between more powerful patrons and less powerful clients. These patrons may be elected officials, bureaucrats, or other employees of the public sector, while clients are ordinary citizens. Patrons provide selective

access to public resources and services to clients; in return, they amass influence for their identity group, and expect to receive votes from their clients if they are parliamentary deputies. In Jordan, *wasta* is primarily a mechanism to bind citizens to the regime through the brokerage of tribes, whose traditions and institutions continue to shape the practice of *wasta* in the Kingdom.

2.3 *Wasta's History in Jordan: The Role of the Tribes*

Wasta's roots lie in the period prior to the beginning of Western colonialism in the Arab world in the 19th and 20th centuries. Before Western powers introduced the concept of the nation-state in the Levant, tribes and tribal confederations were the dominant political units; the Islamic and Ottoman Empires used a decentralized style of governance that gave a great deal of power to local leaders. The modern-day Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was mostly desert populated by nomadic Bedouin tribes, along with some small village outposts. These settled village areas of what is now Jordan were mostly controlled from Damascus under the Ottoman Vilayet (Province) of Syria.

During this period, an informal legal system developed that focused on conflict mediation. The concept of collective responsibility had developed in order to dissuade individuals from committing a wrongdoing; collective responsibility implicated the entire tribe as culpable even if only one member had done something wrong. In the instances when this principle did not serve as a sufficient deterrent, and someone from a tribe did wrong someone from another tribe, the consequences could be difficult to contain, as the wronged tribe would demand justice. Tribes came to rely on a third party *waseet* to bring both sides toward a compromise. The tribes were grateful for the *waseet's* role in avoiding costly tribal war over sometimes minor incidents, and as a result successful *waseets* stood to amass a great deal of prestige and influence. A form of this system remains an option

under Jordanian legal codes; an offended tribe may ask a judge to wait for a period of time before convening a trial in order to attempt to settle the matter first via a meeting between the two tribes, called a *jaha*.¹

After World War I, the British created the Emirate of Transjordan and named as its leader Emir Abdullah, who had served as an important military leader during the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans. Abdullah used his considerable diplomatic skills to gain and maintain the loyalty of the tribes. He did so using traditional *wasta*, making himself a person of prestige who could unite the tribes and settle disputes.² Abdullah also distributed patronage to those who chose to maintain close relationships with him; he did not have a great deal of money, but he was able to give out positions and other honors that raised the prestige of the tribes who received them. Because the British did not establish a large administrative apparatus as they did in other areas under their influence, Abdullah was able to name *shaykhs* and local notables to leadership positions that would eventually become the government and civil service. Abdullah “took advantage of the three main characteristics of society: the notion of tribal solidarity, the tribe as the basic unit of organization and identity, and the leadership role of the *shaykhs*.”³

2.4 Social Control, the Tribes, and the “Hashemite Compact”

King Abdullah’s grandson Hussein, and Hussein’s son and current king Abdullah II, continued Abdullah I’s practice of distributing patronage through the tribes. “Hussein’s authority

¹Al Ramahi, A. (2008). “*Wasta* in Jordan: A Distinct Feature of (And Benefit for) Middle Eastern Society.” *Arab Law Quarterly*, 22(1), 35-62.

²Alon, Y. (2009). *The Making of Jordan: Tribes, Colonialism and the Modern State*. London: I.B. Tauris.

³Al Ramahi 2008: 41.

ultimately rested on the armed forces and the intelligence apparatuses, which were predominately dominated by tribal members;" today, "the stability of the Hashemite monarchy depends on the Palace's ability to manage state resources in the face of competing interests."⁴ Much of the resources that fund this patronage of tribal elites (which often takes the form of jobs) comes from US aid money. Since majority-tribal areas depend on the government for their economic well-being, this system draws the tribes closer to the government.⁵

The nature of tribal support for the Hashemite monarchy has been a question for virtually all of Jordan's history. Earlier, modernization theory analyses tended to focus on the East Bank tribes as traditional, rural, and static. According to this line of thinking, tribal loyalty was rooted in the both King Hussein's personal charisma and political skills, as well as his family ties to the Sharifs of Mecca, traditional guardians of Mecca and Medina. These scholars saw Hussein's power as a combination of patrimonialism and coercive, armed force.⁶

More recent scholarship on this subject has moved away from such static thinking. Gerber (1987) contends that tribal support for the Hashemite monarchy was due to the relative equality of Jordanian society: historically, there were not great social class divisions between peasants and landlords, due to Jordan's tribal and pastoralist economy. Therefore, the army did not become a restive center for dissent as it did in many other Arab countries; thus Jordan did not see military coups as did other regional countries.⁷ For Hourani (1991), post-independence Arab rulers seized upon the concept of social solidarity (*assabiya*

⁴Al Ramahi 2008: 43.

⁵Al Ramahi 2008.

⁶Tell, T. (2013). *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan

⁷Gerber, H. (1987). *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder: Lynne Reiner.

in Arabic) of the tribes in order to secure their own rule. Creation of an “alliance of interests” that attempted to transplant the connections of kinship and locality that bound together tribes and tribal confederations. Modern state-building replaced local control: state bureaucracy supplanted tribal leaders and notables, and the power of the state reached into every village and home.⁸

Tell (2013) builds upon these ideas. In his argument, tribes have supported the monarchy because it “works for them.” It is “social control” at work: “broadly rational actors will shift loyalties to the ruling group” if that ruling group can wield the material and symbolic means necessary to the survival of these political actors.⁹ In what he calls the “Hashemite Compact,” the social welfare system and patronage networks create an exchange of loyalty for economic security.¹⁰ The relationship of tribes and regime is dynamic and symbiotic, therefore: each relies on the other for their mutual survival. From this argument, I draw two conclusions: 1) *Wasta* is, and has been from Jordan’s earliest days, at the very heart of the social compact that binds the tribes to the regime and 2) The tribes are not merely traditional, static actors: their relationship to the regime can shift and even endure tensions as they perceive their needs for survival changing.

2.5 The “New *Wasta*” Today

Thus began the process of tribe-centered social networks of patronage and favoritism that became the “new *wasta*” of Jordan.¹¹ *Wasta* moved away from its origins in promoting the collective good, by settling tribal disputes, toward an intercessory *wasta* that connected

⁸Hourani, A. (1991). *A History of the Arab Peoples*. London: Faber and Faber.

⁹Tell 2013: 11

¹⁰Tell 2013: 12

¹¹Barnett, A., Yandle, B., & Naufal, G. (2013). “Regulation, Trust, and Cronyism in Middle Eastern Societies: The Simple Economics of ‘*Wasta*’.” *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 44(2013), 41-46.

individuals as well as tribes. Today, it is not necessary to be a *shaykh* in order to have *wasta*; officials in parliament, the civil service, the army, and sometimes business can serve as sources of patronage and assistance. “In fact,” as Alon states bluntly, “he functions as a modern *shaykh*.”¹² Nonetheless, tribal prestige remains at the center of the *wasta* system. Tribes seek to place members in high places in order to support individual members, but also to increase the influence that the tribe as a whole enjoys.¹³

Indeed, family and kinship identity remains of paramount importance for Jordanian citizens. “The basic unit of identification for all Jordanians, both indigenous and of Palestinian origin, is the family” and “[t]he first loyalty of the individual is to his family, on whose wealth, welfare, and reputation his own depends.”¹⁴ Even today, sons feel pressure to align with their fathers on economic, political, and social matters. Within tribes, if a dispute occurs, it is expected that the tribe (or sub-groups within the tribe, as the case may be) will band together in a cohesive manner to support the collective. The reality is more complicated and involves political maneuvering, but the pressure remains for unity no matter whether the tribe in question is in the wrong or the right.¹⁵

From a client’s perspective, *wasta* is a fact of life in getting things done. I noted above *wasta*’s key role in employment. Put simply, “one does not obtain a job without *wasta*.”¹⁶ Having *wasta* is not enough to get a job, however. The process for earning employment in Jordan is often unpredictable. The shortage of jobs for qualified candidates means that *wasta* is essential in getting noticed, but a candidate often has to seek to aid

¹²Alon 2009: 155.

¹³Barnett, Yandle, and Naufal 2013.

¹⁴Al Ramahi 2008: 45.

¹⁵Al Ramahi 2008.

¹⁶Cunningham, R. & Sarayrah, Y. (1993). *Wasta: The Hidden Force in Middle Eastern Society*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 104.

of multiple *wastas*, and the situation can get complicated when *wastas* of rival candidates must compete. Individuals with no background may be placed in a job or even supervisory position over more qualified candidates. The whole process often leads to disappointment and resentment. Another factor adding to these ill feelings is the reality that, while some who get jobs through influence rather than merit try hard to prove themselves worthy, many choose to neglect their jobs. Administrators may show up late for work or use government property for personal use; a degree of this behavior is tolerated and goes unpunished.¹⁷

From the patron's perspective, providing *wasta* is both cultural and political. Taking care of one's own tribe is a tenet of tribal culture, and therefore the patron exercises duty when he or she successfully provides a client with a job or other benefit. Politically, bureaucratic jobs, positions in parliament, and roles in the army and intelligence services are highly sought after. Keeping the tribe pleased helps the patron's security in their position. Further, distributing patronage well may lead to promotion; being in a position to distribute *wasta* means that the patron amasses a great number of people who owe him or her favors. These people can, in turn, possibly help the patron get a better job in the future. Especially for deputies in parliament, being a successful *wasta* provider increases the likelihood of being renominated by one's tribe, which all but assures successful election in many districts.

2.6 Why Does *Wasta* Persist?

Since the practice reinforces the kinship identities that are so tightly held in Jordanian culture, perhaps it should not be surprising that *wasta* has persisted. Further, I have noted that *wasta* in politics functions as a kind of clientelism; the academic literature on clientelism tends to emphasize that the incentives within a clientelistic system that

¹⁷Cunningham and Sarayrah 1993.

promote its stability and sustainability. Stokes (2007) uses game theory to demonstrate the reasons why both patrons and clients would lose out if they defected from the goods-for-votes bargain (and that they both have enough information to know they would lose out).¹⁸ Older literature on clientelism saw the practice as fairly stable because it built social capital and norms of reciprocity between patrons and clients.¹⁹

Further, Barnett, Yandle, and Naural (2013) examine *wasta* as an economic institution in order to understand the reasons behind *wasta*'s persistence. To them, *wasta* is simply the most effective available means of organizing social interactions.

Our conjecture is that *wasta*, like any long-standing social custom or institution, has evolved (and continues to be used) in Arab societies because it is generally perceived within these societies as a construct that provides better solutions to a set of social problems and resource allocation issues than could be achieved by alternative institutional arrangements. If this were not the case, other social customs would have evolved that better meet societal needs.²⁰

Building on this assumption of efficiency, they argue that the tribe as a firm would favor the practice of *wasta* as in its own best interests. *Wasta*, like any informal institution, lowers transaction costs. It also reduces information asymmetry, which proves more valuable to the tribes than the gains from trade they could achieve if *wasta* were not part of the equation. They argue that *wasta* also functions as a form of social insurance, and may reduce moral hazard.²¹ All of these factors make *wasta* a beneficial choice for the tribes over the long term.

¹⁸Stokes, S.C. (2007). "Political Clientelism." In C. Boix & S.C. Stokes (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁹See for example J.C. Scott (1976), *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*.

²⁰Barnett, Yandle, and Naufal 2013: 4.

²¹Barnett, Yandel, and Naufal 2013.

2.7 Is *Wasta* a Form of Corruption?

In summary, the pull of kinship identity, a clientelistic electoral system, and tribal microeconomics have all been used to explain the existence and persistence of *wasta* in Jordan. While *wasta* is undoubtedly culturally-embedded, however, many researchers have found that it also has a negative impact on Jordan. *Wasta* promotes unfair allocation of government resources, discourages business and entrepreneurship, and fosters corruption within elite circles. I will explore these impacts in this section; in addition, I will argue that the negative impact *wasta* plays on Jordanian citizens themselves has been under-appreciated, and that it may sow the seeds for significant changes to the phenomenon of *wasta* in years to come.

The academic literature on *wasta* does admit *wasta* can be a form of corruption, although there is a good deal of debate around this topic. Al-Ramahi (2008) notes that, when surveyed, 87% of Jordanians called *wasta* corruption, and that King Abdullah II has explicitly come out against *wasta* as a corrupting practice within Jordan's government. However, she seems unsure whether to conclude that *wasta* is a form of corruption; she argues that to those who use *wasta*, it serves as a legitimate way of getting things done, whereas those who do not have *wasta* resent it as a corrupt practice. She also criticizes Western researchers who are quick to consider *wasta* as corruption. Westerners have trouble understanding *wasta*, she says, because in their societies they feel pulled toward institutions and ideologies rather than to family and kinship ties. In her argument, *wasta* is simply a normal way of doing things for Arabs.²² Similarly, Barnett, Yandle, and Nauwal (2013) consider *wasta* a normal aspect of Arab culture: "It is embedded in the social fabric of Middle Eastern society and is practiced openly, without apparent shame, remorse

²²Al Ramahi 2008.

or guilt.”²³ Indeed, both *wasta* recipients and their patrons often view their *wasta* with pride.

On the other hand, Loewe, Blume, and Speer (2008) state bluntly about *wasta*: “favoritism is a form of corruption.”²⁴ They acknowledge that social and kinship networks can be good for a society because they build social capital. However, *wasta* has the opposite effect: it makes doing business unfair and unpredictable, which discourages investment and hurts Jordan’s economic well-being. There are no objective criteria for obtaining a license, for example, so the risk of starting a new business may become too high for someone who does not already have ties in government. People and businesses can also convince legislators with whom they have connections to make laws that give them an unfair advantage. Finally, building up and maintaining a large social network (including hiring *wasta* fixers) wastes time and resources that could be spent on developing products and services, which harms the international competitiveness of the private sector as a whole.²⁵

The World Bank agrees that *wasta* is a form of corruption and has a negative impact on Jordanian society. In a March 2015 report, the Bank examines the role that *wasta* plays on individuals in the form of poor, arbitrary, and inequitable public service provision. Despite promises of education and health care services on the part of MENA regional leaders, and recurring efforts at bureaucratic reform, MENA countries show poorer outcomes in these areas than their level of economic development would predict. Institutional failures that lead to this reality stem from politically captured authoritarian regimes that do not promote transparency, accountability, or flow of information among citizens, public servants, and providers. These institutional failures allow *wasta*, the distribution of social services

²³Barnett, Yandle, and Naufal 2013: 6.

²⁴Loewe, M., Blume, J., & Speer, J. (2008). “How Favoritism Affects the Business Climate: Empirical Evidence from Jordan.” *Middle East Journal*, 62(2), 259-276: 259.

²⁵Loewe, Blume, and Speer 2008.

according to personal connections rather than law, to dominate; the ultimate result is a provision of social services that is neither equitable nor fair, and which erodes trust among citizens in the institutions that govern them.²⁶

2.8 *Wasta* and Clientelism

At this point, *wasta*'s overall impact on the Jordanian polity remains unclear. Some research suggests that *wasta* provides a glue that binds Jordan's tribes to the regime and the political system. To other scholars, *wasta* provides an efficient means of distributing patronage in a tribal society. To others, *wasta* is a form of corruption that makes it harder to do business. Still other research has found *wasta* to be a driver of inequality and inefficient provision of social services in the Middle East.

I argue in this dissertation that the use of favoritism, patronage, and influence in politics has small scale benefits for some political actors but harms the polity as a whole. In many countries, embracing influence and networks of patronage helps parties, parliamentarians, factions, and tribes achieve and maintain power in government. These networks bind citizens and localities together, and build a sense of mutual benefit between voters and elected officials. In the larger picture, however, such practices promote corruption, which undermines the idea of a constitutional state in which all citizens have equal access to rights and public goods. While this situation provides voters with some goods that they need to survive, it deprives them of nearly all role as political actors: the trade-off for gaining small-scale benefits is that citizens lose the ability to hold elected officials accountable, or to have a say in creating public policy.

Beginning with my case, Jordan, recent research by Ellen Lust and her collaborators

²⁶Brixi, H., Lust, E., & Woolcock, M. (2015). "Trust, Voice, and Incentives: Learning from Local Success Stories in Delivery in MENA." The World Bank Group.

has begun to examine the issue of patronage and clientelism in Jordan's political system. Lust (2009) describes *wasta* in Jordanian parliamentary politics as a clientelistic system. She notes that in Jordan, and in other Arab countries, politicians are often seen more as providers of influence and access to benefits than as policymakers. Many Jordanians report that they go to the polls not to express themselves and their policy ideas, but to ensure that members of parliament with whom they have connections attain or remain in office. "Elections are seldom arenas in which the opposition and incumbents struggle over the rules of the game." Rather, they function as "competitions over state resources."²⁷ Members of parliament are viewed as "service deputies" rather than policymakers. The tie that binds Jordanians to their representatives, then, is not their satisfaction with the MP's legislative ability or advocacy, but their ability to serve as a source of *wasta* because of their position.²⁸ Similarly, Sakijha and Kilani (2002) note that parliament is becoming a locus for *wasta* activity. "Voluntarily or out of social pressure, parliamentarians' role in mediating, or, in other words using *wasta* between citizens and the state [is] becoming their main task."²⁹

Lust, Hourani, and Al Momani (2012) build on this argument. Jordanian elections are vehicles for promoting tribal and personal interests: "In Jordan, social norms governing kinship and other personal relations shape citizens' behavior and expectations regarding who is willing to deliver which services to whom. Jordanians expect that people from the same family, tribe, neighborhood, or personal network will give each other privileged support."³⁰ Candidates begin their campaigns by spreading the word among their families

²⁷Lust, E. (2009). "Competitive Clientelism in the Middle East." *Journal of Democracy*, 20(3), 122-134: 124.

²⁸Lust 2009.

²⁹Sakijha, B. & Kilani, S. (2002). *Wasta in Jordan: The Declared Secret*. Amman: Jordan Press Foundation, 58.

³⁰Lust, E., Hourani, S., & Al Momani, M. (2012). "Jordan Votes: Election or Selection?" *Journal of*

and networks. In fact, they find in a survey that 86% of Jordanians have decided within one week of candidature announcements which candidate they will support; 44% reported they normally support a candidate based on family ties, while 66% vote for someone from their area. Election campaigns are largely free from policy promises. “Campaign events are usually festive occasions with more socializing over tea and sweets than speechifying over political issues.”³¹ As a result, there is little confidence in the electoral system. In 2010, almost half of all voters stayed home, and turnout was very low in heavily Palestinian areas that fall outside the “East Bank” tribal networks that form the monarchy’s traditional support base.³²

In Lebanon, Cammett (2014) studies the relationship between patronage and sectarianism. While she notes access to welfare in Lebanon is heavily dependent on the sectarian identity of the potential recipient, she also finds that some sectarian groups intentionally serve members of out-groups. She concludes that two factors determine whether a party will use inclusive or exclusive criteria in distributing welfare: 1) whether that group seeks power through state institutions as opposed to via protests or violence, and 2) whether the group faces competition from other groups of the same sect. Parties that distribute patronage more inclusively tend to be those that work within national institutions and do not face intra-sect competition for power. She also tests her theory on the Sadrist movement in Iraq and the Baharatya Janata Party in India. There she likewise finds that the distribution of welfare to supporters is an important means of gaining political support.³³

The use of patronage and favoritism is hardly limited to the Middle East, however.

Democracy, 22(2), 119-121: 120.

³¹Lust, Hourani, & Al Momani 2012: 121.

³²Lust, Hourani & Al Momani 2012.

³³Cammett, M. (2014). *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Studies of clientelism and patronage abound, mostly focused on the Global South. Stokes (2005) uses the case of Argentina to address clientelism's impact on the accountability of elected leaders. In Argentina, political parties that distribute patronage ensure that voters keep their end of the bargain (providing electoral support to their patrons) through a complex social network that monitors this support, even though Argentina uses the secret ballot. She terms this concept "perverse accountability." As opposed to democratic accountability, in which citizens select representatives best aligned with their policy interests and hold them accountable by granting or withholding their support at subsequent elections, perverse accountability places the burden on the voter. Patrons provide benefits to selected supporters, and then carefully monitor these supporters to ensure they cast the appropriate votes at elections.³⁴ If they withhold support for the patron, voters risk losing key benefits on which they rely. This mutual dependency between voter and representative highlights the "contingency" of the patron-client relationship that defines political clientelism.³⁵

In Mexico, Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estevez (2007) refer to the distribution of patronage as a political investment strategy: clientelism is intended to keep voters from defecting to another party, and is disproportionately targeted to places in which the party finds this threat most acute.³⁶ In India, Wilkinson (2007) ties the prevalence of patronage provision to the state of political competition. In times with the patronage-heavy Congress Party had a secure majority, patronage provision was low because Congress felt no need

³⁴Stokes, S.C. (2005). "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina." *American Political Science Review*, 99(3) 315-325.

³⁵Hicken, A. (2011). "Clientelism." *The Annual Review of Political Science*, 14, 289-310.

³⁶Magaloni, B., Diaz-Cayeros, A., & Estevez, F. (2007). "Clientelism and Portfolio Diversification: A Model of Electoral Investment with Applications to Mexico." In H. Kitschelt & S.I. Wilkinson (Eds.), *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

to expend the resources necessary to secure votes. Later, when Congress began to face credible competition at all levels, the party significantly ramped up its provision of goods in a clientelistic, directed way.³⁷

2.8.1 Similarities and Differences Between *Wasta* and Clientelism

Faced with a comparison of the practice of *wasta* and clientelistic practices in other societies, it would be useful to define our concepts carefully. Clientelism is a contingent relationship that involves a patron providing selective benefits to the client in return for the client's political support. On the surface, *wasta* is quite similar: more powerful patrons provide benefits for less-powerful clients. In the case of parliamentary deputies, clients are expected to provide the patron with their votes. When moving beyond this simple definition, however, nuances begin to emerge. At the heart of the distinctions between *wasta* and clientelism, ironically, is something both share: embedded-ness in dense organizational networks.

Studies have consistently shown that clientelism is an ongoing, iterated relationship. If patrons and clients did not develop a sense of mutual dependence, defection would be easy and the whole system would fall apart. In order for patrons to ensure the benefits they are distributing are not wasted, there must be an enforcement mechanism. (Above, I noted Stokes' concept of "perverse accountability.") Enforcement requires deep local knowledge as well as the establishment of bonds between patron and client. Patrons often employ brokers for this purpose. Brokers know the people of a neighborhood or electoral district well, and can be the face of the patron to them (and vice versa). In addition, clientelism develops a sense of political loyalty in which patrons and clients come to an understanding

³⁷Wilkinson, S.I. "Explaining Changing Patterns of Party-Voter Linkages in India." In H. Kitschelt & S.I. Wilkinson (Eds.), *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

as to their expectations. There may be some element of moral obligation to this loyalty, for the most part it centers around the knowledge that, in order to play the spoils game, positive participation on the part of the client is required.³⁸

Whereas for clientelism in most places these networks are part of political party machines, in *wasta* this is not always the case. In Jordan, as I have noted, *wasta* is a political institution designed to bind the tribes and the regime. Thus, the enforcement mechanism in *wasta* is tribal loyalty. (This sense of tribal loyalty extends beyond *wasta*, of course, but *wasta* makes use of it for political purposes.) Patrons are expected to provide *wasta* to their tribal clients, but what is the expectation with respect to the client? In general, clients are expected to maintain deference to the tribe in return for the tribe's role as broker of the regime's patronage. Hence, the client also owes deference to the regime itself. This loyalty contains elements, then, of both moral obligation based on cultural expectations as well as a distinct awareness that the client's economic well-being depends wholly on support for the tribe and its members in political office.

These non-party roots of clientelism are not unique to *wasta*, however. Eaton and Chambers-Ju (2014) note that in Colombia, clientelism has its roots in rural society during the colonial period. Powerful local militia leaders emerged and exercised influence independent of the central state. These *caudillos* became important brokers between national elites and often hard-to-access rural areas throughout Colombia. They also created networks with powerful local landowners and political bosses who could mobilize voters. Eaton and Chambers-Ju argue that this clientelistic mode of organization has persisted to the present, despite institutional changes. First, political parties assumed the role of clientelistic providers and brokers. Later, reforms aimed explicitly at reducing the role

³⁸Magaloni, B. (2014). "Conclusion: Defining Political Clientelism's Persistence." In D. Abente Brun & L. Diamond (Eds.), *Clientelism, Social Policy, and the Quality of Democracy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

of clientelism through decentralization merely transferred the role of broker to teachers' unions and town mayors. Once clientelism has taken root, it seems, the expectation of using connections and influence is difficult to break even when institutions change.³⁹

Still, as clientelism and *wasta* are primarily political institutions, the nature of institutions does matter. The nature of brokers, for instance, has a large effect on any clientelistic system. "Brokers solve many information problems for machines. But they create problems as well" because they cannot be effectively monitored by the party leadership.⁴⁰ Party leaders cannot be sure that brokers will deliver cash to clients (in the case of vote buying) or that the broker might not turn against the party if he secretly had another candidate he preferred. Tribes, as brokering institutions, similarly provide a challenge for the regime in its distribution of patronage. The regime must hope that channeling public resources through the tribes will maintain a consistent level of support for the regime among tribal members. Patronage cannot guarantee tribal unity, however, and it cannot guarantee that individual shaykhs or tribal leaders might work against the government while at the same time taking their patronage. Parliamentary deputies play a large role in alleviating this issue, however, because the regime can hold them accountable, threatening to withhold from them patronage they can distribute. As Lust argues, this situation helps to maintain the status quo, because deputies have a great incentive not to rebel.⁴¹

³⁹Eaton, K. & Chambers-Ju, C. (2014). "Teachers, Mayors, and the Transformation of Clientelism in Colombia." In D. Abente Brun & L. Diamond (Eds.), *Clientelism, Social Policy, and the Quality of Democracy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁴⁰Stokes, S.C., Dunning, T., Nazareno, M., & Brusco, V. (2014). *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 16.

⁴¹Lust 2009

2.8.2 Small-Scale Benefits, Large Scale Detriment

In all of these accounts, patronage, influence, and clientelism are viewed as a political strategy that political parties and groups employ in order to achieve and maintain power, and to stave off competition from other parties or factions. Their incentives are, exclusively, winning election after election because winning elections is the mechanism by which they get access to patronage and welfare benefits that they can distribute. Essentially, what develops is a vicious circle of dependence on distributing patronage in order to secure more patronage. The purview of political parties seems to extend, temporally, little beyond their own short-term futures, and geographically, no further than the extent of their electoral district or districts.

What is missing in this discussion is the success or failure of the polity as a whole. As it is usually understood, the use of clientelism and patronage presupposes a key trade-off: voters receive material goods in exchange for giving up a role in contributing to policies that will impact their country's future.⁴² Do voters actually forego concerns they might have with the political system as a whole because parties give them other goods? Would they allow the country's economy to deteriorate as long as the needs of their families are met?

Both common sense and empirical evidence suggest that there is more to the story. Policies, such as the setting of prices, curriculum standards of public schools, regulations concerning health care delivery, and foreign investment in the economy, all impact the daily lives of voters in some way. In the Middle East, the provision of *wasta* benefits did not prevent the Arab Spring protests from rocking regimes across the region.⁴³ Even prior to

⁴²Kitschelt, H. & Wilkerson, S.I. (2007). "Citizen-Politician Linkages: An Introduction." In H. Kitschelt & S.I. Wilkinson (Eds.), *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴³Bixi, Lust, and Woolcock 2015.

the Arab Spring, tension had been building in Jordan. Much of this dissent and contention came from the East Bank “hinterlands,” that have long formed the core of the monarchy’s support base. Tell (2015) notes that restiveness among the East Bank tribes began in 1989 with the government’s decision to enact economic austerity policies in order to secure IMF loans.⁴⁴ This marked a change: “tribal Transjordanians – rather than the largely urban Jordanians of Palestinian dissent who had been the mainstay of opposition 1950s and 1960s – protested against economic liberalization, the monarchy’s US-aligned foreign policy, and Jordan’s attempt to normalize relations with Israel.”⁴⁵ Even the heart of the monarchy’s support, Jordan’s military, experienced turmoil in a 2010 movement of East Bank veterans who aligned themselves with youth protesters and others in opposition to privatization reforms.

Thus, we can see evidence that even those who most benefit from patronage may balk at the notion of giving up a say in their country’s present policies and overall trajectory. Curiously missing from the theoretical discussion of *wasta* in Jordan I outlined above, however, is the role of those who disproportionately benefit less from *wasta*: the Kingdom’s Palestinian-Jordanian citizens. While Jordanian censuses carefully avoid the issue of identity, it is commonly believed that Palestinians make up around 60% of the Kingdom’s population; as such, their role in the political system cannot be ignored. Lynch (1999) notes that Palestinians participate as actors in the Jordanian state much differently than do Jordanians of “East Bank” tribal background. While East Bankers make up the backbone of regime support, especially in the civil service, intelligence, and military services (as noted above), Palestinians are mostly excluded from the public sector and instead

⁴⁴Tell, T. (2015, November 4). “Early Spring in Jordan: The Revolt of the Military Veterans.” Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved March 7, 2016 at <http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/11/04/early-spring-in-jordan-revolt-of-military-veterans/iigv>

⁴⁵Tell 2015.

dominate private sector businesses.⁴⁶

2.9 Hypotheses

I argue that the prevalence of *wasta* erodes the confidence of Jordanians, both from East Bank and Palestinian backgrounds, in their political system as a whole. The function of *wasta* in Jordan is akin to the “tragedy of the commons” theory: political actors (namely, tribal patronage networks) act in self-interested by monopolizing as much of the state’s resources as they can for their own benefit. In doing so, they deplete trust in the state’s ability to provide resources for the whole political community, as it is constitutionally mandated to do. I will examine *wasta*’s detrimental role in three areas: the citizen as political actor, confidence in state institutions, and prospects for reform. Put simply: the more influence Jordanians believe that *wasta* has, the more negative their political attitudes.

2.9.1 Confidence in State Institutions

While access to *wasta* varies among tribes and between tribes and Palestinians, all Jordanians fall under the purview of state institutions. Jordan’s constitution guarantees the equality of all Jordanian citizens (Article 6), and also guarantees that Jordanian citizens may petition public officials on any public or private matter (Article 17).⁴⁷ In reality, however, *wasta* leads to unequal status, and unequal access to public officials. The parliament (called the Chamber of Deputies) is the highest elected body in Jordan, and the only one that represents all citizens in the Kingdom. Therefore, I examine whether attitudes on

⁴⁶Lynch, M. (1999). *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan’s Identity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁴⁷Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. January 1, 1952. Accessed June 1, 2016 at http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/constitution_jo.html

wasta's prevalence impact assessments of the job that parliament is doing.

Hypothesis 1: An increase in the assessment of *wasta*'s prevalence leads to a decrease in satisfaction with the job parliament is doing.

2.9.2 The Citizen as Political Actor

In much the same way as I hypothesize that *wasta* negatively impacts assessments of the functioning of state institutions, I also hypothesize that it deteriorates an individual citizen's sense of him or herself as political actor. If institutions are ineffective, and access to public officials is uncertain and based on connections, citizens should have less confidence in their own ability to influence politics. Thus *wasta* would erode confidence in the state as a national project to which all citizens contribute, and lead to feelings of apathy or disengagement in the workings of the political process.

Hypothesis 2: An increase in the assessment of *wasta*'s prevalence leads to a decrease in the belief that the individual has an influence on Jordan's politics

2.9.3 Confidence in Promised Reforms

In the wake of Jordan's Arab Spring protests in 2011, King Abdullah II released a series of discussion papers outlining the goals of a political reform program. Subsequently, laws based on this reform vision have been debated, and in some cases, passed. (I discuss this process in greater detail in Chapter 5.) However, if Jordanians have little faith in their political institutions or their own ability to impact politics, due to the prevalence of *wasta* in the political system, I hypothesize they will also have little confidence in the state's ability to enact the kind of meaningful reforms that protesters demanded, and which the government pledged to make.

Hypothesis 3: An increase in the assessment of *wasta*'s prevalence leads to a decrease

in the belief that the government is undertaking political reform.

2.10 Research Design

My research consists of a multi-method approach employing survey data from the Arab Barometer’s second and third waves, as well as interviews I conducted during six months of fieldwork in Jordan from April to September 2015. Using both quantitative and qualitative data allows me to explore the connections between *wasta* attitudes and political attitudes with both breadth and depth; survey data will illustrate the correlation between *wasta* and politics across a large sample of Jordanians, while interviews will help to uncover the causal mechanisms behind these relationships.

2.10.1 Case Studies and Process Tracing

My approach is to utilize a case study in order to explore these causal mechanisms that underly the patron-client relationship and its role in the political system. George and Bennett (2005) discuss the study of causal mechanisms as process tracing, which “attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.”⁴⁸ They provide an apt illustration: barometer readings predict changes in weather but do not actually cause these changes. The actual cause lies in weather systems, wind, topography, and other natural phenomena.⁴⁹ In just such a way, we can see from the evidence that people vote for representatives that give them benefits and we can ascertain the incentives

⁴⁸George, A. & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 206.

⁴⁹George and Bennett 2005.

that likely help perpetuate this system. But how do people actually relate to their representatives? Are they really satisfied with the status quo, and its *wasta* underpinnings, or are there seeds of dissent and opposition to the *wasta* system? What mechanisms actually connect *wasta* to an individual's decision to vote, not vote, or disengage entirely from the system?

Causal process observations are useful in both theory development and theory testing. Both quantitative and qualitative researchers have long understood the benefit of possessing deep knowledge of cases in order to develop theories; such deep knowledge can improve the specification of statistical models and observations from the field can help qualitative researchers refine theories.⁵⁰ Mahoney argues that researchers can also use these CPOs for theory testing, as independent variable CPOs, mechanism CPOs, and auxiliary outcome CPOs. Independent variable CPOs provide information about the presence of an independent variable. A mechanism CPO “provides information about whether an intervening event posited by a theory is present.”⁵¹ Information from auxiliary outcome CPOs refers to phenomena that should be present alongside the main outcome of interest if in fact the theory has been correctly specified.

My use of causal process observations lies primarily in the realm of theory development. I have argued that from the literature on *wasta* and patronage takes these phenomena for granted as successful means of obtaining the support of voters. Research has rarely explored the perceptions and attitudes of clients, however, and it is through studying the ways that *wasta* shapes political attitudes that I propose to build a theory of *wasta*'s effect as a detriment to the polity. However, the literature on *wasta* is neither large nor coherent enough to allow us to derive complete theories from it. Rather, this dissertation seeks to

⁵⁰Mahoney, J. (2010). “After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research.” *World Politics*, 62(1), 120-147.

⁵¹Mahoney 2010: 128.

use qualitative tools in order to continue refining the scope of this emerging theory on the *wasta*'s overall impacts.

At the same time, the CPOs I gather do inform causal mechanisms as well. Existing research on *wasta* suggests that it is a source of corruption and that it hurts Jordan's economy and the provision of social services to citizens. To what extent do citizens view it this way? Do these attitudes impact their view of their political institutions and their own role as political actors? I will examine the mechanisms by which Jordanian citizens connect *wasta* to their broader political views. By illuminating the causal connections between *wasta* and political attitudes, this research will highlight the political context in which *wasta* is found; that *wasta* is not merely a relationship between patron and client, but part of the social contract itself, serving as an important element of political life in Jordan. As George and Bennett (2005) note, "Process tracing is an indispensable tool for theory testing and theory development not only because it generates numerous observations within a case, but because these observations must be linked in particular ways to constitute an explanation of the case."⁵² It is this rich explanation that I seek by using a case study of Jordan.

2.11 Case Selection and Theoretical Impact

Jordan provides an ideal setting in which to study the political impact of *wasta*. As I have noted above, Jordan's very state identity is tied closely to *wasta* and the patronage distributed through the East Bank tribes since the country's founding. Tribal and kinship identity remain salient among Jordanians. However, Jordan is a multi-ethnic society that saw huge influxes of Palestinians after the 1948 and 1967 regional wars. Jordan also has a small but significant number of Circassians and Chechens that have resided in the cities

⁵²George and Bennett 2005: 210.

of Jordan since the 19th century. As such, tribal identity cannot by itself encompass what it means to be a Jordanian. Further, no matter the identity of a particular Jordanian, no citizen can avoid the reach of the central government both for policies and the provision of social services; indeed, even *wasta* itself is very often channeled through the parliament and civil services, as the *wasta* literature notes. Thus, Jordan provides me the opportunity to challenge some of the assumptions of the existing literature on *wasta*, since this literature does not give adequate attention to political institutions or the idea of Jordanians as citizens.

This research draws the literature on *wasta* into new territory in two primary ways. First, I question whether *wasta* ought to be taken for granted as existing research appears to assume. The *wasta* literature does not consider whether changing identities, economic realities, or political attitudes may de-stabilize traditional *wasta* relationships. I will examine the expectations Jordanians hold of their governments, and the extent to which these expectations may be changing. Second, I consider seriously the “client” side of *wasta*’s patron-client relationship. Until now, the *wasta* literature has focused on the phenomenon as one dictated by large, “top-down” forces such as tribes, national identity, and Jordan’s history. While these factors are without a doubt important, attention to individual attitudes and beliefs has been lacking. I will consider the role individual Jordanians as political actors through both quantitative and qualitative public opinion research. I will also attempt to bring these “bottom-up” forces into relationship with the “top-down” forces of institutions and identity as well, particularly in looking at the potential path for reform in Jordan’s future.

These same contributions to the *wasta* literature also apply to the literature on clientelism, which I reference above. While I deal with *wasta* as more than just clientelism, I argued above that *wasta* does indeed function as clientelism in the Jordanian electoral system.

Existing research on clientelism tends to consider clientelism a stable, self-perpetuating system due to the rational incentives of the iterated relationships between voters and representatives found in clientelistic systems. The literature does not adequately consider the broader political context of clientelism in order to ask whether there may be forces that could cause significant changes in clientelistic relationships. Further, like the literature on *wasta*, the primary actors are seen as patrons and political parties, with scant attention given to the role of clients. Although clientelism plays a role in my analysis, it is not central to my argument; however, I may be able to make preliminary suggestions to the literature on clientelism based on this research which I could follow up in the future in a more focused way.

This research can lead to a better understanding of the Jordanian political system as well. If *wasta* is causing negative attitudes about government, it could have broad implications. Rather than just reflecting badly on the tribal system, or culture and traditions, *wasta* may be causing Jordanians to question the very legitimacy of their political institutions (which have little accountability to these citizens, as I established earlier). Such a situation could imply that without a reform movement away from *wasta*, contentious activities like protest may become more common as Jordanians (especially young Jordanians) feel they have no other way to have their expectations and policy preferences met. While such protests would be unlikely to threaten the foundations of Jordan's political system, they would put added strain on a polity that is already contending with high unemployment, wars outside its borders, over a million refugees from Syria and Iraq, and other pressing domestic and international challenges. High levels of dissent could make it difficult for Jordan's leaders to adequately focus on addressing these challenges.

Current discussions within the Kingdom suggest that the Kingdom's leadership does, in fact, consider *wasta* to be a problem with which it must contend. In Chapter 5, I will

discuss in greater detail King Abdullah II's reform vision, which he outlined in a series of five discussion papers. At the core of this vision is breaking down the private interests at the heart of the *wasta* system in favor of strong political parties with national-level policy platforms and strategies. Another major component of this reform vision is increasing accountability of the government and civil service, thereby making it more difficult for an office manager to hire his relative, for instance. In Chapter 5, I will also note the actions that have been taken to move towards these reform ideals, including several laws passed or introduced in 2015.

2.12 Methodology

2.12.1 Survey Research and Quantitative Analysis

Up to this point, there has been little large-N public opinion research applied to the question of *wasta* in Jordan (or any Arab countries). The Arab Archives Institute conducted a poll on *wasta* in 2000 using a sample of 400 Jordanians, 320 of them “politically-active elites.”⁵³ Responses showed that respondents believed *wasta* was extremely prevalent in Jordanian society, that they would use it themselves, and that *wasta* should be eradicated. This study provides important information about *wasta* on a social level, but it is weakened by the fact that such a high percentage of its sample consisted of elites.

Nonetheless, the Arab Archives Institute study shows that it is possible to collect public opinion survey data on *wasta*. As I noted above, I consider it a great priority to assess client-side views on *wasta* in Jordan. In Chapter 3, I will explore Jordanian views on *wasta* and politics in greater depth, according to models based on the sub-hypotheses I outline above. I utilize data from the Arab Barometer, whose most recent wave comprised a

⁵³ Al Ramahi 2008.

random sample of 1795 Jordanians. Using Arab Barometer data will allow me to examine *wasta*'s impact on political attitudes on a societal level, which I then compliment with qualitative interview data in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.12.2 Interviews

To test my hypotheses, I spent thirteen months in Jordan, seven of these conducting semi-structured interviews with both elites and non-elites. I chose to use interviews for several reasons: first, interviews are an appropriate method for conducting exploratory, theory-building research such as this project.⁵⁴ Interviews, especially semi-structured interviews that allow participant freedom of contribution, permit the researcher to hear various perspectives in order to discern patterns as well as avenues for future research. Mosley notes that "interviews are an important, and often essential tool for making sense of political phenomena. Interviews allow scholars to interact directly with the individuals...who populate our theoretical models."⁵⁵ Interviews used in this way contribute to the crafting of more accurate and useful survey instruments; a broader survey on *wasta* is one of my goals for continuing this research beyond my current dissertation project.

Second, the connections among *wasta*, the political system, and public opinion has been only lightly examined by the theoretical literature thus far. As a result, interviews are a necessary way to explore the causal mechanisms that connect attitudes toward *wasta* with broader political attitudes and behaviors; a survey alone would not adequately address the causal questions of my project. An ethnography of *wasta* in Jordan, which would help to draw out causal mechanisms at work, would limit my purview to a particular site (such as one tribe or even one family). Such a study would be beneficial at a later stage of research,

⁵⁴Mosley, L. (2013). "Introduction. 'Just Talk to People'? Interviews in Contemporary Political Science." In L. Mosley (Ed.) *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

⁵⁵Mosley 2013: 12.

but the broader scope that interviews provide (eg, examining differences among tribes, age groups, and genders) are better-suited to exploratory research on *wasta* and the political system.

Third, interview research allows personal contact between researcher and subject. As Mosley notes, “An interview researcher knows not only what a respondent says, but also how the respondent behaved during the interview, whether the respondent hesitated in answering some questions more than others, and the context in which the interview took place.”⁵⁶ Such observation is generally not possible for large-N survey research. For the purpose of this project, whose subject matter can be somewhat sensitive, the demeanor of a respondent can be incredibly telling. Does the respondent appear to be candid or merely telling me what she thinks I want to hear? Are there inconsistencies of behavior; for instance, is the respondent confident when answering some questions and hesitant when answering others? Might the respondent be “sugar-coating” his response because of a high-profile dissident arrest that happened the day before? Discerning the honesty of a survey or interview subject can never be a certain thing, but such observations and context clues can provide me with non-verbal data on *wasta* and political attitudes that may be as valuable as some interview responses I obtain. This personal contact also allows me to build trust with my interviewees; in a society (i.e., Jordan) heavily reliant on personal relationships, I cannot ignore the likely correlation between the trust of an interlocutor and the quality of data I obtain from that interlocutor.

2.12.3 Population and Sampling

In my non-elite interviewing, I have restricted my population to Jordanians between the ages of 18 and 35. Young people in this age range make up a sometimes staggeringly

⁵⁶Mosley 2013: 16.

high percentage of national populations across the Arab world; in Jordan, 2012 estimates suggest that individuals between the ages of 19 and 35 make up fully a third of the population. According to the same government estimate, only 18% of the Kingdom's population is over the age of 35!⁵⁷ Since 2007, Jordanians over the age of 18 have been eligible to vote (previously, the minimum voting age was 19). Voting is not the only political participation of interest to this project, but using the age of 18 as a lower cut-off allows me to focus on those Jordanians who may participate in politics formally and are thus likely to have developed opinions about politics and political topics. As I noted above, with 82% of the population falling below the age of 35, this age is a reasonable upper cut-off for my population as well. The 18 to 35 demographic is a key job-seeking group as well, making opinions on *wasta* among this group more likely. According to a former government minister, only half of all university graduates find employment upon finishing their studies.⁵⁸ According to Jordan's Department of Statistics, fully a quarter of all Jordanians aged 20-24 were unemployed as of January 2015. Obtaining jobs is not the only reason one would use *wasta*, or have opinions on it, but it is an important correlate. In short, falling into the 18 to 35 age group makes one more likely to have opinions on political and economic issues, and also to be engaged in political activity.⁵⁹

I use non-random strategies for selecting potential interviewees. Lynch notes that when selecting a sampling strategy in political science qualitative work, random sampling remains a "gold standard" in the minds of some researchers because it approximates survey

⁵⁷"Estimated Population of the Kingdom by Sex and Age Group, at End-Year 2012." Department of Statistics, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. <http://www.moh.gov.jo/Documents/annual%20report-2012.pdf>

⁵⁸Malkawi, K. (2015). "Youth Unemployment Remains a Major Challenge for Jordan." *The Jordan Times*, 18 July 2015. <http://www.jordantimes.com/youth-unemployment-remains-a-major-challenge-for-jordan>

⁵⁹See, for example, M. Harris (2015) "Jordan's Youth After the Arab Spring" from the Lowi Institute. <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/jordans-youth-after-arab-spring>

research. However, random sampling is not always possible nor is it always desirable.⁶⁰ “Insights drawn from in-depth research with non-randomly selected respondents may also generate relational, meta-level information about the society or organization in which they are embedded – information that is simply unobtainable any other way.”⁶¹ Political considerations, time, resources, and the dynamics of a particular culture are all valid reasons why non-random sampling may be used.

Moreover, non-random sampling is often more conducive when using process tracing methods, as this project does. Lynch notes that process tracing generates causal process observations (CPOs), which contain important information about contexts and causal mechanisms. “This extra information contained in CPOs means that non-random selection of the cases from which CPOs are derived is not necessarily a threat to inference.”⁶² Further, she notes that non-random samples can be used effectively to help interpret survey or experiment results; one of my purposes in choosing interviews, in fact, is to help interpret the statistical models I note above. Non-random sampling may mean a tradeoff in generalizability, but it provides key depth of insights into the case under study.⁶³

Snowball sampling serves as my primary sampling method. Lynch describes snowball sampling as “a method for gradually accumulating respondents in the sample based on recommendations from earlier interviewees.”⁶⁴ Snowball sampling is valuable, in general, because it makes interview subjects more accessible. In the case of Jordan, some sort of pre-existing connection to interview subjects is nearly mandatory. In Jordan, as well as

⁶⁰Lynch, J. (2013). “Aligning Sampling Strategies with Analytic Goals.” In L. Mosley (Ed.) *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

⁶¹Lynch 2013: 25.

⁶²Mosley 2013: 45-46.

⁶³Mahoney, J. & Goertz, G. (2006). “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research.” *Political Analysis*, 14(3), 227-249.

⁶⁴Mosley 2013: 52.

other Arab countries, great emphasis is placed on social networking and familiarity. This is not to imply discrimination against outsiders; Arabs have a well-deserved reputation for thorough hospitality. But in a society in which so many people feel strong ties to family and tribe, social trust is always enhanced based on “who you know.” Further, as a male researcher in Jordan, access to women without some prior connection is nearly impossible. There is a social stigma against the interaction of single men and women who are not married to each other. An example: when first meeting my female language partner, a university student, she was accompanied by a group of her female friends (who left soon after). Even though we had been connected by a professor friend of mine, she found it socially awkward to meet an unfamiliar man alone.

In total, I interviewed forty-seven Jordanians, thirty-six of them non-elite citizens interviews. Of the citizens interviews, twenty were Jordanians of Palestinian origin while sixteen were of East Bank tribal background. (A directory of interviews may be found in Appendix B. Because of IRB requirements and standard practice for similar projects in the Middle East, non-elite interview subjects are not identified by name. In a few cases, expert subjects are also not identified by their own request.) Non-elite respondents received roughly the same set of interview questions (see Appendix A); however, since interviews were semi-structured, I allowed conversations to take their own directions at time, while still covering the same topics in each interview in order to assure the interviews were comparable. Elite respondents (including academic experts) received a different interview depending on their expertise with respect to *wasta*, and these interviews sometimes took the form of a more open-ended conversation than a formal interview.

2.13 FADFED

Leaders of Tomorrow, an Amman-based NGO that focuses on increasing youth empowerment and civic engagement, has developed a unique research tool to collect public opinion data in Jordan. For events using the tool FADFED, meaning “speak out” or “let it out,” researchers place white sheets of paper in a public place and ask passersby to contribute their written responses and reactions to posted question prompts. FADFED events are often held in conjunction with similar events, such as large public debates Leaders of Tomorrow also holds, in order to encourage respondents to feel comfortable in an environment of open discussion and opinion-sharing. The organization has had a great deal of success with FADFED since it was first deployed in 2010. FADFED has allowed for the collection of large amounts of opinion data at one time in a research context (that is, Jordan) not always conducive to sharing potentially sensitive opinions in public. More information on the FADFED methodology can be found in Chapter 4.

During my field research in Jordan, Leaders of Tomorrow was engaged in a project to study the relationship between *wasta* and identity among Jordanians. This similarity to my own research was purely coincidental, but the organization was kind enough to grant me access to the FADFED data they had collected on *wasta*; I translated the Arabic from their white papers and assisted them in analyzing it qualitatively and quantitatively. Some of the findings of the FADFED data analysis I discuss in Chapter 4 will also be incorporated in a (non-public) report to their grant funder, which I authored. They have given me full permission to use the data and the analysis that I derived from it.

2.14 Moving Forward

In this foundational chapter, I have argued that our current understanding of *wasta* in Jordan is incomplete. Existing theories of *wasta* disagree on whether, and in what ways, *wasta* benefits or hinders Jordanian society. Most research accepts *wasta* as a given in Jordanian political life because of cultural factors and the incentives of Jordan's tribes. However, I argue that *wasta* is inherently tied to Jordan's broader political system, and that neglecting this role in politics hides the potentially negative role of *wasta* through its potential to cause frustration and dissatisfaction with the political system as a whole. Further, I argue that the role of clients (that is, the recipients of *wasta*) has mostly been ignored in existing *wasta* research. In the chapters that follow, I will use public opinion data from Jordan, both quantitative and qualitative, to make the following case: that the role of Jordan's institutions in supporting the unfairness of the *wasta* culture have led to deep dissatisfaction among Jordanians, that this dissatisfaction has driven Jordanians away from an active role in political life, and that Jordanians feel they have little role in influencing their country's future. These factors, combined with politicization of Jordan's youth and a decline in traditional identity ties, mean that while *wasta* may "work" in the short term, on the large scale it has the effect of poisoning Jordan's political culture.

Chapter 3

Wasta and Jordanian Political Attitudes: Evidence from the Arab Barometer Survey

In the previous chapter, I outlined the current academic literature on *wasta* and critiqued the fact that it does not adequately address the political realities in which *wasta* is embedded. I also noted that the literature on *wasta* does not take the role of clients seriously. In this chapter, I will use data from the Arab Barometer to argue that *wasta* has a negative impact on Jordan's political system. To do this, I will connect the attitudes that Jordanian respondents hold toward *wasta* with their opinions on politics in the Kingdom in three main areas that align with my three hypotheses from Chapter 2: their views of themselves as citizens able to participate in the political system, their views of the effectiveness of their political institutions, and their views towards the possibility of political reform. In Chapters 4 and 5, I will connect this survey evidence to qualitative interview data I collected in Jordan from March to September 2015.

3.1 About the Arab Barometer

The Arab Barometer began in 2005 as a collaborative effort among scholars at the University of Michigan, Princeton University, and universities in Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, Algeria, and Kuwait. These researchers developed the Arab Barometer in consultation with the Global Barometer, a global network of regional surveys in Latin America, Africa,

East Asia, and South Asia. The goals of the Arab Barometer are “to produce scientifically reliable data on the politically-relevant attitudes of ordinary citizens, to disseminate and apply survey findings in order to contribute to political reform, and to strengthen institutional capacity for political opinion research.”¹ The Barometer fills a crucial role in the Arab world in particular, a region where public opinion data has been inconsistent, difficult to collect, and sparse.

The Arab Barometer has been launched in three waves. The first wave, from 2006 to 2008, saw the Arab Barometer survey given in seven countries: Morocco, Algeria, Kuwait, Palestine (West Bank and Gaza), Jordan, Lebanon, and Yemen. Resulting data was released publicly in 2009. During the second wave, in 2010 and 2011, surveys were given in an expanded selection of countries: Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Mauritania, Syria, and Iraq. The third and most recent wave of the Arab Barometer was given in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen from 2012 to 2014. All three waves focused heavily on democracy and political reform. They have sought to measure “citizen attitudes, values, and behavior patterns relating to pluralism, freedoms, tolerance and equal opportunity; social and inter-personal trust; social, religious and political identities; conceptions of governance and an understanding of democracy; and civic engagement and political participation.”²

3.2 Three Models of *Wasta* and Politics

I have constructed three regression models using Arab Barometer data from the second and third waves. (Two models use third wave data; for one model I use second wave data

¹“Introduction.” *The Arab Barometer*. <http://www.arabbarometer.org/>

²“Introduction.” *The Arab Barometer*. <http://www.arabbarometer.org/>

because the second wave asked a question that allows me to look at individual attitudes toward citizenship, whereas this question was dropped from the third wave.) These models will allow me to directly address the hypotheses I established in Chapter 2. Whereas the existing literature on *wasta* takes *wasta*'s existence and persistence for granted, I will call this assumption into question. Below, I will examine the correlation between attitudes on *wasta* and political opinions in Jordan in order to argue that *wasta* impacts how Jordanians see their political system; in fact, *wasta* leads to negative views on all three sub-hypotheses. Wasta views correlate with negative opinions on agency as a citizen, on the effectiveness of political institutions, and leads to pessimism about political reform.

In the case of all models, I isolate data pertinent to Jordan, rather than using the full sample of countries the Arab Barometer surveyed. I do this not just because Jordan is my case, but because institutional arrangements differ widely among the cases in the Arab Barometer, which would make it difficult to generalize among them. For instance, Saudi Arabia does not have an elected parliament, Egypt is undergoing significant transition in its political institutions, and *wasta* in Lebanon falls along sectarian lines that are not present in Jordan.³ In Chapter 6, I address certain ways I do think it is possible to draw connections among cases in the Arab world, however.

Detailed information on the questions used for each variable and coding of responses, as well as frequency tables of all the variables used, may be found in Appendices C and D.

3.2.1 Dependent and Explanatory Variables

In the three models that follow, the independent variable of interest is NEED WASTA, which asks respondents to what degree they believe that it is impossible to get a job without

³Cammett, M. (2014). *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

connections, as opposed to a situation where jobs go to the most qualified candidates. The variable is coded as a three point scale: connections are not required to obtain jobs, connections are sometimes necessary to obtain a job, or needing connections to obtain a job is widespread. NEED WASTA serves as a proxy for respondent views about the prevalence of *wasta* in society. As I will note below, it also suggests respondents believe prevalence of *wasta* is a bad thing, because it correlates highly with believing corruption is both present and getting worse.

In Model 1, the dependent variable is PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE. PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE asks respondents how they rate the performance of Jordan's parliament. Responses are coded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "very bad" to "very good;" thus, PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE is an ordinal variable. In Model 2, the dependent variable is POLITICAL INFLUENCE, which asks respondents the extent to which they agree that "citizens have the ability to influence policies." Responses are coded as a four-point Likert scale from "I absolutely disagree" to "I strongly agree." Thus, POLITICAL INFLUENCE is an ordinal variable. In Model 3, the dependent variable is REFORM. REFORM asks respondents whether their government is "currently undertaking radical reforms in its institutions and agencies." Responses are coded as "no, definitely," "no," "yes," and "yes, definitely." Therefore, REFORM is an ordinal variable. To make interpretation less confusion, I relabeled the responses as "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," and "strongly agree." (Because some might argue that it is hard to distinguish between "yes" or "no" and "yes or no definitely," in Appendix E I include a model with REFORM coded as just "yes" or "no." The results hold.)

3.2.2 Control Variables

As I noted above, Model 1 and Model 3 utilize data from the Arab Barometer’s third wave. Because the question on whether citizens can influence politics, which addresses my second sub-hypothesis, was dropped from the third wave, I use data from the second wave instead for Model 2. For all three models, the control variables are the same; however, Model 2’s control variable data is of course different, since it comes from the second wave data set. Frequency tables for all control variables, from both the second and third wave Arab Barometer data, may be found in Appendix D.

Countries throughout the Arab world are experiencing an unprecedented youth bulge. According to Jordan’s Department of Statistics, nearly 82% of the population is under the age of 35. (As I will explain in Chapters 4 and 5, this is the reason I focused on Jordanians in the 18-35 age range.) Therefore, AGE is a critical control variable to test whether a respondent’s age might be causing a correlation we would otherwise attribute to NEED WASTA. Similarly, access to education may yield different attitudes toward citizenship, political institutions, or reform. EDUCATION is coded by level of schooling completed: none (basic literacy), elementary school, preparatory school, secondary education, a diploma or professional qualification, baccalaureate degree, or postgraduate degree. While it is often common to code a dummy variable for gender as female, I have chosen to create the dummy variable MALE instead. In Jordan, women make up less than 25% of the workforce⁴ Therefore, it is more theoretically useful to examine how males, who are more likely to be seeking jobs, respond in particular to the independent variable NEED WASTA. Whether a respondent currently has a job is measured by the dummy variable UNEMPLOYED. Respondents who report being unemployed and looking for work are coded “1” while all others

⁴Hourani, S., Van Raalten, J., & Gotra, G. “Youth Unemployment Challenges in Jordan 2013.” Report for FHI 360 by Leaders of Tomorrow.

(retired, student, or homemaker) are coded 0. INCOME codes personal monthly income in Jordanian dinars (JOD).

In addition to these demographic variables, I have included several other control variables of interest. The first is INTEREST IN POLITICS, coded as a four-point Likert scale (from “not interested” to “very interested”), which asks respondents to what extent they are interested in politics. Because *wasta* is more prevalent in the public sector due to the dominance of tribal patronage in bureaucratic jobs, whether a respondent is employed in the public vs. private sector may impact the model. Therefore, I have created the dummy variable PUBLIC SECTOR, which codes identifications of work sector as either “1” for public sector or “0” for private sector or other. VOTED codes whether a respondent voted in the last election.

Finally, it is necessary to address the issue of Palestinian Jordanians. Official data on identity does not exist, but Jordanians of Palestinian descent are thought to make up around 60% of the Kingdom’s population. Further, as I noted in Chapter 2, *wasta* is heavily mediated by tribal culture and loyalties; we could call *wasta* a product of Jordan’s tribal culture. Its impact is likely to be felt differently, therefore, depending on whether the respondent comes from tribal vs. Palestinian background. As I detail in Chapter 4, East Bankers from tribes are much more integrated into the Jordanian state than are Palestinians; therefore, the kind of *wasta* (especially jobs) available to Palestinians differs qualitatively from the kind of *wasta* that East Bankers can access. Therefore, in each of the three models, I utilize a base model as well as a second model that includes a PALESTINIAN variable, which codes whether the respondent identified their country of origin as Palestinian (“1”) or Jordanian (“0”).

3.2.3 Hypothesis 1: Confidence in State Institutions

Table 3.1 displays the results of Models 1-4, which uses `PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE` as the explanatory variable of interest. Across all four regressions, `NEED WASTA` is negative and significant to the 0.01 level. That is, the models suggests that those who believe *wasta* is needed to get a job are more likely to view parliament as ineffective (i.e., to hold more negative views toward parliament’s ability to solve the country’s problems). This finding holds despite the presence of the control variables described above. Because `PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE` is an ordinal variable, I employ ordered logistic regressions in all four models. Therefore, in Table 2, I give marginal effects results, which allow us to analyze more closely the affect that `NEED WASTA` has on `PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE`.

As Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show, among those who believe the need to use *wasta* in order to get a job is widespread 45% say that parliament’s effectiveness is “bad” or “very bad,” while only 31% rate parliament’s effectiveness as “good” or “very good.” These results hold almost identically in Model 2 despite the addition of the `PALESTINIAN` variable. (The marginal effects for Model 2 are found in Appendix E.) In Models 3 and 4, which include `PUBLIC SECTOR` as a control variable rather than `UNEMPLOYED`, the difference is even larger: 54% of those who believe *wasta* is widespread rate parliament’s effectiveness as “bad” or “very bad” while just 26% of them say parliament is “good” or “very good.” Model 4’s results are nearly identical despite the addition of the `PALESTINIAN` variable as a control. (The marginal effects for Model 4 are found in Appendix E.)

Across all four models, respondents who believe *wasta* is widespread are also noticeably less likely than their peers to rate parliament’s effectiveness negatively. For instance, in Model 1, 36% of respondents who do not think *wasta* is needed to get a job rated parliament as “good” while only 33% of respondents who think *wasta* is needed sometimes and 25% of respondents who think *wasta* is widespread did the same. Similarly, while 12% of

Table 3.1: Wasta and Assessment of Parliament

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
DV: Parliament Effective				
Need Wasta	-0.462*** (-3.53)	-0.465*** (-3.55)	-0.476*** (-3.67)	-0.481*** (-3.70)
Interest in Politics	-0.148 (-1.96)	-0.152* (-2.01)	-0.110 (-1.48)	-0.115 (-1.54)
Voted	-0.0597 (-0.40)	0.0161 (0.10)	-0.319* (-2.19)	-0.329* (-2.25)
Male	-0.390* (-2.43)	-0.364* (-2.26)	-0.461* (-2.55)	-0.465* (-2.57)
Age	-0.00237 (-0.44)	-0.00345 (-0.64)	-0.00792 (-1.19)	-0.00759 (-1.14)
Education	-0.134* (-2.16)	-0.137* (-2.22)	-0.154** (-2.58)	-0.154* (-2.57)
Unemployed	-0.332 (-1.50)	-0.328 (-1.48)		
Income	-0.000716* (-2.04)	-0.000771* (-2.19)	-0.000143 (-0.51)	-0.000147 (-0.52)
Palestinian		0.330* (2.06)		-0.147 (-0.88)
Public Sector			0.309* (2.09)	0.275 (1.80)
cut1				
Constant	-4.098*** (-8.00)	-4.051*** (-7.90)	-4.438*** (-8.02)	-4.513*** (-8.05)
cut2				
Constant	-2.884*** (-5.77)	-2.830*** (-5.65)	-2.995*** (-5.57)	-3.068*** (-5.63)
cut3				
Constant	-1.867*** (-3.79)	-1.807*** (-3.66)	-2.083*** (-3.93)	-2.156*** (-4.01)
cut4				
Constant	0.0834 (0.17)	0.150 (0.30)	-0.119 (-0.22)	-0.192 (-0.35)
Observations	671	671	650	650

t statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.2: Marginal Effects: Effectiveness of Parliament, Model 1

With UNEMPLOYED, without PALESTINIAN		
Outcome 1: Parliament is “very bad”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.1129208	.0367182
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1324517	.0184934
Wasta is always needed	.204121	.0168102
Outcome 2: Parliament is “bad”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.1786113	.038419
Wasta is sometimes needed	.197453	.0189612
Wasta is always needed	.2472698	.017482
Outcome 3: Parliament is “neither good nor bad”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.2303004	.0219381
Wasta is sometimes needed	.2364357	.0166979
Wasta is always needed	.2350995	.0163909
Outcome 4: Parliament is “good”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.3573231	.0524403
Wasta is sometimes needed	.3310682	.0264695
Wasta is always needed	.2504804	.0174055
Outcome 5: Parliament is “very good”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.1208444	.0404635
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1025915	.0169696
Wasta is always needed	.0630294	.0092352

Table 3.3: Marginal Effects: Effectiveness of Parliament, Model 3

With PUBLIC SECTOR, without PALESTINIAN		
Outcome 1: Parliament is “very bad”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.1338645	.039796
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1363788	.0194158
Wasta is always needed	.224226	.0179307
Outcome 2: Parliament is “bad”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.2529748	.0410449
Wasta is sometimes needed	.2554855	.0212732
Wasta is always needed	.3146968	.0191863
Outcome 3: Parliament is “neither good nor bad”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.2169358	.0168125
Wasta is sometimes needed	.2169535	.0168029
Wasta is always needed	.1999641	.0156331
Outcome 4: Parliament is “good”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.308275	.0536389
Wasta is sometimes needed	.304952	.0269906
Wasta is always needed	.2124339	.0168427
Outcome 5: Parliament is “very good”		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is not needed for getting a job	.0879499	.029172
Wasta is sometimes needed	.0862302	.0156689
Wasta is always needed	.0486793	.0081058

respondents who do not think *wasta* is necessary rated parliament as “very good” and 10% of respondents who believe *wasta* is needed sometimes said the same, only 6% of respondents who feel *wasta* is widespread rate parliament’s effectiveness as “very good.”

3.2.4 Hypothesis 2: The Citizen as Political Actor

Table 3.4 describes my second set of models, using the dependent variable POLITICAL INFLUENCE. Across all four models, NEED WASTA is negative with significance at the 0.01 level. That is, the models suggest with a high degree of confidence that there is an inverse correlation between assessments of the need for *wasta* in obtaining a job and the respondent’s belief that he or she has influence in Jordan’s politics: the more a respondent believes *wasta* is widespread, the less influence she believes she has. This finding holds despite the presence of the control variables described above. Because POLITICAL INFLUENCE is an ordinal variable, I employ ordered logistic regressions in all four models. Therefore, in Table TBA, I give marginal effects results, which allow us to analyze more closely the affect that NEED WASTA has on POLITICAL INFLUENCE.

As Table 3.5 shows, in Model 5, 54% of respondents who believe that the need for *wasta* is widespread “disagree” or “strongly disagree” that they have political influence. 40% of such respondents “agree” that they have influence on Jordan’s politics. Strikingly, only 6% of respondents who believe *wasta* is widespread “strongly agree” they can influence politics in the Kingdom. Results are nearly identical for Model 6, which adds in the PALESTINIAN control variable. (Marginal effects for Model 6 are found in Appendix E.) Table 3.6 shows Model 7, which replaces UNEMPLOYED with PUBLIC SECTOR. 56% of respondents who believe the need for *wasta* is widespread “disagree” or “strongly disagree” that they can influence politics. On the other hand, 39% of such respondents “agree” they have political influence while only 5% “strongly agree.” Results are nearly identical for Model 8, which

Table 3.4: Wasta and Political Influence

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
DV: Political Influence				
Wasta Needed for Jobs	-0.687*** (-3.70)	-0.722*** (-3.85)	-0.638*** (-3.74)	-0.584*** (-3.38)
Interest in Politics	0.243* (2.02)	0.246* (2.03)	0.140 (1.46)	0.126 (1.30)
Voted	0.206 (0.95)	0.242 (1.10)	0.0473 (0.27)	-0.0179 (-0.10)
Male	-0.361 (-1.60)	-0.395 (-1.74)	-0.0287 (-0.12)	-0.116 (-0.48)
Age	-0.0161* (-1.96)	-0.0136 (-1.66)	-0.0119 (-1.44)	-0.0108 (-1.27)
Education	-0.0550 (-0.68)	-0.0509 (-0.63)	-0.145* (-2.01)	-0.129 (-1.77)
Unemployed	-0.321 (-0.99)	-0.315 (-0.96)		
Income	0.000406 (1.31)	0.000327 (1.05)	-0.000247 (-0.84)	-0.000135 (-0.46)
Palestinian		0.209 (0.95)		-0.658*** (-3.41)
Public Sector			0.306 (1.66)	0.144 (0.75)
cut1				
Constant	-3.563*** (-4.75)	-3.453*** (-4.53)	-4.064*** (-5.84)	-4.226*** (-5.98)
cut2				
Constant	-2.271** (-3.09)	-2.150** (-2.87)	-2.500*** (-3.69)	-2.624*** (-3.82)
cut3				
Constant	0.403 (0.55)	0.582 (0.79)	0.110 (0.16)	0.00418 (0.01)
Observations	317	314	466	462

t statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

adds the PALESTINIAN control variable. (Marginal effects for Model 8 are found in Appendix E.)

In a similar way to PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE, POLITICAL INFLUENCE also leads to significant differences within response groups. For instance, in Model 5, 12% of respondents who believe *wasta* is either not necessary to get a job, and 12% who believe it only necessary sometimes, “strongly disagree” that they have the ability to impact politics, while fully 25% of respondents who believe *wasta* is widespread “strongly disagree” that they have political influence. On the other hand, 28% of respondents who do not think *wasta* is widespread “strongly agree” they have political influence, while only 6% of those who do believe *wasta* is widespread “strongly agree.”

Table 3.5: Marginal Effects: Influence on Politics, Model 5

With UNEMPLOYED, without PALESTINIAN		
Outcome 1: “Strongly disagree” citizens influence politics		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed for getting a job	.1179871	.0467196
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1150094	.0247499
Wasta is always needed	.2488365	.0275969
Outcome 2: “Disagree” citizens influence politics		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed for getting a job	.204439	.0506618
Wasta is sometimes needed	.2012319	.0286153
Wasta is always needed	.2889262	.0275356
Outcome 3: “Agree” citizens influence politics		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed for getting a job	.5412704	.0532425
Wasta is sometimes needed	.5440443	.0369068
Wasta is always needed	.4024251	.0295482
Outcome 4: “Strongly agree” citizens influence politics		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed for getting a job	.1363034	.0518871
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1397144	.0297499
Wasta is always needed	.0598121	.0128756

Table 3.6: Marginal Effects: Influence on Politics, Model 7

With PUBLIC SECTOR, without PALESTINIAN		
Outcome 1: “Strongly disagree” citizens influence politics		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed for jobs	.1572503	.0780391
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1071414	.0183229
Wasta is always needed	.210404	.0215549
Outcome 2: “Disagree” citizens influence politics		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed for jobs	.3099575	.0689928
Wasta is sometimes needed	.254351	.0253916
Wasta is always needed	.3450123	.0239777
Outcome 3: “Agree” citizens influence politics		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed for jobs	.4537208	.1025958
Wasta is sometimes needed	.520619	.031023
Wasta is always needed	.3879991	.0247928
Outcome 4: “Strongly agree” citizens influence politics		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed for jobs	.0790713	.0438867
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1178887	.0212275
Wasta is always needed	.0565846	.010416

3.2.5 Hypothesis 3: Confidence in Promised Reforms

Table 3.7 displays my final set of models, which in which REFORM is the explanatory variable of interest. Across all four models, REFORM is negative, and this result is significant to the 0.01 level. Therefore, like PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE and POLITICAL INFLUENCE, REFORM has an inverse relationship with NEED WASTA: respondents who believe *wasta* is more important in getting a job consequently report less agreement with the proposition that the Jordanian government is engaged in institutional reform. These findings hold despite the presence in the model of the control variables I noted earlier in the chapter. As in the previous two sets of models, REFORM is an ordinal variable and therefore I employed ordered logistic regressions in Models 9-12. Therefore, it is useful to examine marginal effects in order to interpret these findings further.

In Table 3.7, I display the marginal effects of NEED WASTA in Models 9-12. In Model 9, the effect of NEED WASTA is clear: 82% of respondents who do not believe *wasta* is needed for jobs either “agree” or “strongly” agree that the state is undertaking reform, while only 69% of those who believe *wasta* is widespread “agree” or “strongly agree” that reform is happening. The effect of NEED WASTA within response groups is notable, except in the case of those who “agree” reform is happening: 60% of respondents who believe *wasta* is not needed “agree,” as do 60% of respondents who believe *wasta* is sometimes needed, while 56% of respondents who believe *wasta* is widespread “agree.” The difference between 60% and 56% is not terribly large. Results are almost identical for Model 10, which adds the PALESTINIAN variable. (Marginal effects for Model 10 are found in Appendix E.)

For Model 11 (Table 3.9), which substitutes PUBLIC SECTOR for UNEMPLOYED, 71% of respondents who believe *wasta* is not needed for jobs “agree” or “strongly agree” that reform is happening while 64% of respondents who believe *wasta* is widespread say the same. Within groups, the effect of NEED WASTA appears to be smaller than with Models

Table 3.7: Wasta and Political Reform

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
DV: Reform Happening				
Need Wasta	-0.496* (-2.57)	-0.494* (-2.56)	-0.561** (-3.09)	-0.562** (-3.09)
Interest in Politics	0.108 (1.13)	0.106 (1.11)	0.164 (1.81)	0.160 (1.77)
Voted	0.119 (0.62)	0.164 (0.83)	0.344 (1.93)	0.336 (1.88)
Male	-0.500* (-2.47)	-0.481* (-2.37)	-0.527* (-2.25)	-0.528* (-2.25)
Age	-0.00334 (-0.49)	-0.00401 (-0.59)	-0.0223** (-2.82)	-0.0222** (-2.80)
Education	-0.300*** (-3.85)	-0.300*** (-3.86)	-0.156* (-2.11)	-0.156* (-2.11)
Unemployed	-0.00279 (-0.01)	-0.00431 (-0.02)		
Income	-0.000336 (-0.84)	-0.000364 (-0.90)	-0.000202 (-0.60)	-0.000206 (-0.61)
Palestinian		0.224 (1.08)		-0.128 (-0.65)
Public Sector			0.230 (1.27)	0.199 (1.07)
Constant	3.551*** (5.14)	3.494*** (5.04)	3.600*** (5.12)	3.662*** (5.15)
Observations	667	667	655	655

t statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.8: Marginal Effects: Progress of Political Reform, Model 9

With UNEMPLOYED, without PALESTINIAN		
Outcome 1: “Strongly disagree” reform is happening		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed to get a job	.0404946	.0181107
Wasta is sometimes needed	.0503437	.0100208
Wasta is always needed	.0832556	.0115856
Outcome 2: “Disagree” reform is happening		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed to get a job	.1349361	.0468519
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1599086	.0208564
Wasta is always needed	.2278445	.0176926
Outcome 3: “Agree” reform is happening		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed to get a job	.5957774	.0239304
Wasta is sometimes needed	.5981182	.019866
Wasta is always needed	.5668485	.0194764
Outcome 4: “Strongly agree” reform is happening		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed to get a job	.2287918	.0773918
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1916296	.0261755
Wasta is always needed	.1220513	.0132304

Table 3.9: Marginal Effects: Progress of Political Reform, Model 11

With PUBLIC SECTOR, without PALESTINIAN		
Outcome 1: “Strongly disagree” reform is happening		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed to get a job	.0765471	.0279733
Wasta is sometimes needed	.0687903	.0125064
Wasta is always needed	.1034001	.0127693
Outcome 2: “Disagree” reform is happening		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed to get a job	.2104274	.0507465
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1954915	.0224477
Wasta is always needed	.2545488	.0185016
Outcome 3: “Agree” reform is happening		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed to get a job	.5346523	.029095
Wasta is sometimes needed	.5399709	.0209527
Wasta is always needed	.5069049	.0198365
Outcome 4: “Strongly agree” reform is happening		
Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Wasta is never needed to get a job	.1783733	.0556549
Wasta is sometimes needed	.1957474	.025902
Wasta is always needed	.1351463	.0141934

9 and 10. For instance, among those who “agree” reform is happening (who again form the largest group), 53% of respondents who believe *wasta* is never needed for getting a job fall in this category, while 54% of those who believe it is sometimes needed and 51% of those who believe it is widespread do. Thus, the substantive effect of NEED WASTA within categories is marginal at best for Model 11. Following a pattern, the results are nearly identical for Model 12, which adds the PALESTINIAN variable. (Marginal effects for Model 12 are found in Appendix E.)

3.3 Data Analysis

Survey data suggests that *wasta* does indeed have a negative affect on how Jordanians view their own roles as political actors, the effectiveness of their institutions, and the government’s willingness (or ability) to carry out reform. All of the regression models I constructed above bear out this finding, and the negative direction of correlation in each case is significant to the 0.01 level, suggesting we can place a high degree of confidence in *wasta*’s negative impact. The marginal effects bear out this impact and aid our interpretation of the data.

The data above lead to several questions, however, and I will outline these in the sections that follow. First, NEED WASTA, as it exists in the Arab Barometer’s dataset, only allows us to capture the prevalence of *wasta*. But what value do respondents attach to *wasta*? If, to respondents, *wasta* is neither a positive or negative phenomenon, it may not matter whether it correlates with negative political views. Second, it is a bit puzzling that the PALESTINIAN variable is not significant in the model, and that it hardly impacts NEED *wasta* when we examine the marginal effects. (As I noted repeatedly, the impact of NEED *wasta* in models with and without the PALESTINIAN variable was basically identical.) Third, it would be useful to delve a bit more into the impact of PUBLIC SECTOR vs. UNEMPLOYED,

especially in the marginal effects of the models using REFORM as the explanatory variable.

The independent variable in all three sets of models, NEED WASTA, tells us about perceptions on the prevalence of *wasta*, but does not give us information about how respondents place value on *wasta* per se. In other words, it is possible some respondents may view *wasta* as widespread and bad, while some may view it as widespread and a positive thing, and others may not care much at all. (Similarly, it is possible that respondents who believe *wasta* is not needed to get a job might wish that it were, possibly because they consider themselves to have a lot of *wasta*.) Without having some idea of the value respondents place on *wasta*, it is difficult for me to argue that negative perceptions of *wasta* lead to negative perceptions of politics, as I argue in Chapter 2. (Ultimately, my qualitative research found in Chapters 4 and 5 addresses this question in greater depth, but we also have the ability to conduct a check within the Arab Barometer dataset itself.)

The literature on *wasta* debates whether *wasta* should be considered a form of corruption, but if respondents who believe that *wasta* is prevalent also believe that corruption is present in Jordan, this finding would suggest respondents connect *wasta* and corruption. Thus, it would also suggest that respondents place a negative value on *wasta*. Therefore, I have examined the correlation between NEED WASTA and a variable called CORRUPTION PRESENT. CORRUPTION PRESENT simply asks respondents whether they believe there is corruption present within state institutions and agencies; responses are coded “yes” or “no.” Table 3.10 displays the results of this cross-tabulation. The correlation between perceptions of *wasta* prevalence and perceptions of corruption prevalence are clear: 93% of respondents who believe *wasta* is widespread, and 86% of those who believe *wasta* is sometimes needed to get a job, believe there is corruption in Jordan’s institutions; on the other hand, only 35% of those who believe *wasta* is never needed to get a job believe that corruption is present in Jordan’s institutions and agencies.

Table 3.10: Wasta and the Presence of Corruption

NEED <i>wasta</i>	No	Yes	Total
Never needed	37 (65%)	20 (35%)	57 (100%)
Sometimes needed	52 (14%)	319 (86%)	371 (100%)
Widespread	88 (7%)	1119 (93%)	1207 (100%)
Total	177 (11%)	1458 (89%)	1635 (100%)

I also examine the correlation between NEED WASTA and CORRUPTION WORSE. CORRUPTION WORSE asks respondents whether they view corruption in Jordan's state institutions relative to where it was two years ago. Responses are coded as "Less than it was 2 years ago," "The same as it was 2 years ago," and "More than it was 2 years ago." Table 3.11 displays the results of this cross-tabulation. From the table, we can see there is a strong correlation between NEED WASTA and CORRUPTION WORSE; respondents who believe *wasta* is more pervasive also believe that corruption is worse than it was two years ago. 45% of respondents who believe needing *wasta* to get a job is widespread believe corruption is getting worse, compared to 34% who say corruption is the same as it was and 22% who believe it is better than it was two years ago. Among those who believe *wasta* is not needed to get a job, 70% believe that corruption is less than or the same as it was two years ago, while only 30% believe corruption is worse than it was two years ago.

Table 3.11: Wasta and the Worsening of Corruption in the Past Two Years

NEED <i>wasta</i>	Less	The same	More	Total
Never needed	6 (30%)	7 (35%)	7 (35%)	20 (100%)
Sometimes needed	77 (25%)	140 (45%)	96 (31%)	313 (100%)
Widespread	493 (45%)	374 (34%)	240 (22%)	1107 (100%)
Total	576 (40%)	521 (36%)	343 (24%)	1440 (100%)

Therefore, we can see strong evidence from the data that respondents who believe *wasta* is more prevalent in the job market correspondingly believe that corruption is present, and that it is getting worse. Those who do not think *wasta* is needed to get a job do not

seem particularly worried about corruption: they are much less likely to see it as present and those who do see it as the same or getting better. Thus, I argue that in the three sets of models I created above, an increase in NEED WASTA among respondents is likely not value-neutral; rather, it suggests that respondents who believe *wasta* is more prevalent also see this prevalence as tied to corruption. Thus, the models provide support to my hypotheses that negative views of *wasta* lead to negative perceptions of political influence, the effectiveness of political institutions, and the possibility of reform. I will show in Chapters 4 and 5 that interview data supports my argument as well.

Secondly, the PALESTINIAN variable is not significant in any of my models, and it does not alter the marginal effects of NEED WASTA. Because *wasta* is, in many ways, the domain of the tribes thanks to their dominance of the civil service and parliament, we might have expected to see the fact that a respondent is Palestinian having some impact on his or her *wasta* views. More than that, I also might have expected being Palestinian to lead to a significantly worse outlook on political influence and the effectiveness of political institutions since, as Lust, Hourani, and Al Momani and others note, the deck is stacked against Palestinians in parliament. Because of the dominance of *wasta* in elections, Palestinians have less influence on which candidates win in districts in which Palestinians do not hold a majority, and because gerrymandering has led to under-representation of Palestinians in parliament, they have fewer Palestinian-majority districts over which to have influence in the first place.

A potential reason for this outcome is an under-representation of Palestinian Jordanians in the Arab Barometer data. As Table 3.12 shows, 28% of respondents in Jordan identify as Palestinian in the third wave, and 38% do in the second wave. As I have noted elsewhere, though the Jordan's Department of Statistics avoids asking Palestinians to identify themselves in censuses, many estimate the Palestinian population of Jordan to

be around 60%, or perhaps even higher. Regardless of the actual number of Palestinians in Jordan, 28% and 38% are too low by even the most conservative estimates. It is unclear the reason for this under-representation. The Arab Barometer may have captured fewer Palestinians by over-sampling outside of Amman’s large cities; this is unlikely, however, due to the fact that researchers distributed face-to-face interviews by population size of Jordan’s governorates. Thus, if there was a systematic under-representation of Palestinian Jordanians, it would likely have come from a high non-response rate among Palestinians. A more likely reason for the under-reporting of Palestinians, however, lies in the wording of the question, which asks for “Country of origin” (as opposed to, perhaps, ethnic origin). It is possible that a large number of Palestinian Jordanians reported their country of origin as Jordan, either because they consider this to be the case or because they felt it would be a better response, perhaps to emphasize the unity of the Kingdom. (Only 11 respondents gave an answer other than Jordan or Palestine in the third wave. In the second wave, seven respondents answered “other” and one respondent declined to respond. Missing data consists entirely of respondents from outside Jordan; in other words, all of Jordan’s are captured by “Jordan,” “Palestine,” or “other.”)

Table 3.12: “Country of Origin” Among Jordanians

Arab Barometer Third Wave		
Jordan	1294	72%
Palestine	501	28%
Total	1795	100%
Arab Barometer Second Wave		
Jordan	728	62%
Palestine	452	38%
Total	1180	100%

Lastly, it is apparent that PUBLIC SECTOR plays a role in at least two of my sets of models. In the first set of models examining PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE as the dependent

variable, PUBLIC SECTOR has the effect of increasing a respondent's negative attitude when we examine the marginal effects of NEED WASTA. Among those who believe *wasta* is widespread in finding jobs, 45% rate parliament's effectiveness as "very bad" or "bad" in the model including the UNEMPLOYED variable, while in the PUBLIC SECTOR model that number jumps to 54%. In the final set of models that use the REFORM dependent variable, 82% of respondents who believe *wasta* is not needed for jobs also "agree" or "strongly agree" that reform is happening in Jordan in the UNEMPLOYED model, while that number falls to 71% among the same group in the PUBLIC SECTOR model.

These results are somewhat puzzling. Because government employees likely used *wasta* to get their jobs, we might expect them to be favorable toward the system and toward Jordan's political institutions. Yet, we see that in the PUBLIC SECTOR models, respondents are more likely to give negative assessments of parliament and less likely to believe reform is occurring. As I have noted, Jordanians see their own members of parliament, who are normally relatives, as service deputies and might logically support these individual members if asked; however, it may be that Jordanians in government are closer to parliament and its policy-making (or lack thereof) and may be more critical as a result. They also may resent parliament for exercising oversight and budget authority over their offices, or otherwise interfering to add their workload. Similarly, government employees may be closer to the ongoing reform process by virtue of working for public sector offices. As such, they may be more skeptical that reforms are being carried out, because they do not yet see changes in their own unit or because they have seen reform processes stall in the past.

3.4 Conclusion

It is clear from the aggregate data that attitudes on *wasta* in Jordan lead to negative assessments of political institutions, political agency, and the potential of the Kingdom's

reform process. Above, I find that in logistic regression models using an array of control variables, NEED WASTA's effect is significant with relation to all three dependent variables. Further, the marginal effects of the three models provide evidence that these correlations are substantively significant as well: even given the presence of other potential causes, attitudes on *wasta* correlate negatively with attitudes on my three political dependent variables. Further, attitudes on *wasta*'s prevalence, which the NEED WASTA variable allows us to see, correlate with attitudes on corruption, leading to the conclusion that we are really capturing a negative value judgment on the question of *wasta*.

The aggregate data from the Arab Barometer, therefore, is helpful in allowing me to address the hypotheses that I outlined in Chapter 2. However, substantively significant correlations do not alone give us much information about the causal mechanisms at work. Why do Jordanians who view *wasta* negatively also have negative attitudes toward politics? Do we see differences between East Bank Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin that the Arab Barometer data cannot capture? For this reason, I complement this macro-level data with a series of interviews that I carried out during nine months of field research in Jordan. Chapters 4 and 5 detail the results of this interview research.

Chapter 4

Qualitative Evidence for the Connection Between *Wasta* and Politics in Jordan

In the previous chapter, I provided evidence from the Arab Barometer that feelings of frustration in the *wasta* system are widespread among Jordanians. Further, Jordanians seem to connect these *wasta* frustrations to their own agency as political actors, their assessments of the effectiveness of Jordan's political institutions, and their optimism or pessimism about the potential for reform. In this chapter, I employ the interview and FADFED methods I outlined in Chapter 2 in order to explore these issues qualitatively. I will argue that the qualitative evidence compliments Chapter 3's statistical evidence. Jordanians, especially young Jordanians, express deep frustrations with *wasta* and the role it plays in their political system. Their complaints about the unfairness it impacts the legitimacy with which they regard the foundational institutions of Jordanian society. Further, political awareness of *wasta* seems to be only increasing among the young.

4.1 The Context of Jordanian *Wasta*

Before examining my interview data, it might be helpful to examine the situation of *wasta* in Jordan and the ways it has changed recently. As I noted in Chapter 2, *wasta* is an issue that impacts East Bank and Palestinian Jordanians in different ways. Palestinian Jordanians have been systematically excluded from the public sector, and hence from the

primary source of *wasta* in the Kingdom. They therefore have developed a dominating presence in Jordan's private sector. Further, it would be wrong to jump to the conclusion that in Jordan, whose political system has undergone significant change in the past several decades, that the institution of *wasta* has somehow remained unchanged.

I noted in Chapter 2 that, on the large scale, *wasta* plays a role in the alliance between the tribes and the regime that has kept the Kingdom stable for decades, despite ample predictions of Jordan's imminent collapse on the part of Western observers. This alliance has entailed a nearly total dominance of the civil service, the army, and the intelligence service by East Bank Jordanians. The regime has made little effort to integrate Palestinian Jordanians, although Palestinians have served in Cabinet positions and the occasional Palestinian has served as prime minister (such as Taher al-Masri in 1991). By extension, while Jordanians of tribal background are well-integrated into the *wasta* and patronage networks that come from civil service, army, and intelligence connections, Palestinian Jordanians largely are not.

In the interview sections below, I will note that East Bank Jordanians speak with greater ease about *wasta*, likely because they and their families are integrated into *wasta* networks. Palestinian Jordanians, on the other hand, speak about political *wasta* in a more abstract way that made it clear that *wasta* was something more distant from their lived experience. In fact, many Palestinian Jordanians make specific complaints about having bureaucratic red tape that their East Bank counterparts do not have. One gave a recent example of needing a passport: he was forced to wait several weeks because of a supposed problem with his passport photo. East Bank friends of his, however, get passport renewals in an hour, and without even having to show up at the office in person.¹

Palestinian Jordanians do have *wasta*. However, as multiple sources described it to me,

¹Palestinian male activist, interview with the author, September 14, 2015.

Palestinian *wasta* is inherently limited by the fact that private sector companies need to make a profit, as opposed to the public sector, which does not. Hiring lots of unnecessary workers would be a strain on the government budget, it's true, but the need to appease the tribes usually outweighs such considerations. This is especially the case since Jordan has always had wealthier allies (Britain, then Iraq, and now the United States and Saudi Arabia) that would keep the Kingdom afloat in the interest of regional stability. On the other hand, private sector companies that hire incompetent workers could face losing money or even bankruptcy. Therefore, there is pressure to hire family in some cases, but usually incompetent family members will either be put in positions where they cannot do harm or will not last very long. One analyst pointed to the case of Jordanian Christians (who are mostly Palestinian). Christian companies (which count among their number some of the most successful companies in the Kingdom) will often hire Christians employees, but the internal culture within the Christian community dictates that first a prospective employee must get a Western education and work for another company to gain experience before getting a job.²

Despite the role of tribal and Palestinian identity in the institution of *wasta*, political observers of Jordan that I spoke to cautioned against viewing *wasta* as an East Bank vs. Palestinian issue only. It is all too easy for foreign observers to reduce the Kingdom's political and social reality to this dichotomy, they note; besides, the current situation of *wasta* in Jordan does not fall neatly along these lines. In their view, Jordanian's economic conditions have deteriorated noticeably in the past two decades, or even less. Thus, the worsening impact of *wasta* has not been limited to one group or the other. Said one NGO leader: "You're talking about 80% of the population that's living paycheck to paycheck, on the edge of barely making it, so price increases or rising unemployment could devastate

²Dr. Sami Hourani (NGO leader), interview with the author, May 17, 2016.

them.”³ Jordan has experienced significant population growth; according to the last census, conducted in the fall of 2015, Jordan’s population grew by 87% since 2004.⁴ Along with this population growth, unemployment and the cost of living have also increased. This has led “hungry people” who have become desperate to survive to rely even more on *wasta* and even outright corruption.⁵

Differences in economic conditions between East Bankers and Palestinians are often overblown, as well. “Yes, there’s a lot of poverty in the rural [East Bank] areas, but there’s a lot of poverty in East Amman [heavily Palestinian] and in the Palestinian camps. It equals out.”⁶ This argument calls into question a common dichotomy in analysis of Jordanian’s political economy: the dichotomy of successful Amman vs. the struggling periphery governorates. One journalist noted, “Amman isn’t even doing that well – west Amman [the hub of business] isn’t even doing that well. It’s a false idea.”⁷ Thus, both East Bankers and Palestinians number among the 20% who are doing well and the 80% who are not doing well (according to Sami Hourani, above). It is not clear, then, that the prevalence *wasta* is having a disproportionate impact on either group at the moment; both, we might say, face significant challenges. Further, observers noted that even successful businesses in west Amman are always cautiously looking at the business climate, and will move to another country if political or economic conditions seem to be deteriorating.⁸

To observers, *wasta* and corruption have become even more prevalent than they were

³Dr. Sami Hourani (NGO leader), interview with the author, May 17, 2016.

⁴Obeidat, O. (2016, February 22). “Population Grew by 87% Over a Decade – Census.” *The Jordan Times*. Retrieved June 2, 2016 from <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/population-grew-87-over-decade-%E2%80%94-census>

⁵Dr. Sami Hourani (NGO leader), interview with the author, May 17, 2016.

⁶Dr. Sami Hourani (NGO leader), interview with the author, May 17, 2016.

⁷Rana Sweis (journalist), interview with the author, May 18, 2016.

⁸Amman-based journalist, interview with the author, May 9, 2016.

in the past. As one put it, “A generation ago, getting a job by *wasta* was something people would hide. Now, they brag about it.”⁹ Further, corrupt politicians demand bribes in offices, even if there is a crowd of witnesses. “In the municipality [the Municipality of Amman], everyone is corrupt, from the mayor down to the guy who cleans the streets”¹⁰ They all expect *wasta*, and they could care less about doing a good job or having competent people running the city. Even the culture of the country is changing: “Ten or fifteen years ago, you would never see people throw trash from their cars, but now it happens every time you turn around. There’s no sense of ownership or pride in the country anymore.”¹¹ Others point to poor driving in Amman (which, to be fair, is by no means limited to Jordan). Their overall sense is that people are realizing the government does not care about serving them well, so citizens have stopped caring about even keeping the streets clean, much less participating in politics.

Thus, the backdrop of the connection between *wasta* and politics in the lives of young Jordanians will contain elements of identity, generation, and social change. Tribal and Palestinian identity play an important role; however, identity by itself does not seem to determine *wasta* views. Rather, identity shapes the nuances and details of a respondent’s political narrative. Tribal Jordanians have much more experience with the “ins and outs” of *wasta* and the political process, whereas Palestinians are more generally frustrated by its impermeability. But both groups feel equally powerless to impact Jordan’s political life. Further, young Jordanians are living in an era that they find “better” than the past in some ways while “worse” in others. Ideas of democracy and human rights are more prevalent in Jordan than ever, but Jordanian youth also face a deteriorated economic and political

⁹Rana Sweis (journalist), interview with the author, May 18, 2016.

¹⁰Amman-based journalist, interview with the author, May 9, 2016.

¹¹Rana Sweis (journalist), interview with the author, May 18, 2016.

situation: Jobs are more scarce, prices are on the rise, corruption is more prevalent, the need for *wasta* has become even more acute, and the Kingdom is feeling pressure from Middle East regional turmoil.

As I note in Chapter 1, the gap between Jordanians and their government was a primary motivation for this dissertation. This gap is something that political observers that I spoke to identified, and the Jordanian young people that I spoke to all reflected on it in clear ways. The idea of contributing to a common cause, or engaging in politics, has become mostly foreign to Jordanian youth. As I argue throughout this dissertation, and as I will explore through the following interview and FADFED data, a major source of this lack of empathy between citizens and leaders is the institution of *wasta*.

4.2 Interview Results

4.2.1 *Wasta*: East Bankers and Palestinians

Identifying as a Jordanian of tribal background or a Palestinian Jordanian was the fundamental influence on *wasta* attitudes among the young Jordanians that I interviewed. (For the sake of consistency, I will refer to the two groups as East Bankers and Palestinians. When I reference “Jordanians” or “Jordanian citizens,” I mean Jordanians across both ethnic groups.) Regardless of their background, all interviewees cited the tribal system as the source of *wasta* in Jordan. Though respondents mostly downplayed the idea of tension between East Bankers and Palestinians, it was clear that East Bankers felt more comfortable talking about how *wasta* operates, while Palestinians spoke in more general terms and tended to be more disengaged and frustrated.

Palestinians largely view Jordan’s tribal system as the focal point of *wasta*, although they acknowledge that there is Palestinian *wasta* as well. (As I note in Chapter 2, most

public sector jobs are reserved for East Bankers, while Palestinians normally choose private sector careers as a result. Therefore, Palestinians have little influence when it comes to matters of government jobs or bureaucratic matters.) Some Palestinian interviewees did not view the actual amount of *wasta* as being higher among the tribes, but they nonetheless feel that the power and influence of the tribes, including tribal *wasta*, far outpaces their own. They described the power of the tribes as “scary,” and tribal politics as resembling the mafia.¹² Palestinian respondents commonly expressed the view that “the tribes control everything” in Jordanian politics and society.¹³ A commonality was that Palestinians were likely to say, directly or indirectly, that the tribes and government were bound together by *wasta*; therefore, tribal *wasta* was more damaging than *wasta* found in this private company or that one. There was a sense, then, that the government is for all people and has some responsibility to its people, although the respondents were not able in every case to articulate what those responsibilities should be.

By way of example, Palestinians often illustrated their views of *wasta*’s unfairness by citing that East Bankers who get arrested can get away with crimes because of *wasta*. In their view, if a tribal youth is caught with marijuana, or steals something, or “even if he hurts or kills someone,” one phone call from a tribal shaykh or other leader would ensure his release from prison.¹⁴ A number of respondents felt the system was getting worse, and that East Bankers were able to get away with even more because of *wasta*. An East Bank student I spoke to implicitly disagreed with this assertion, however. Without prompting from me, he admitted that *wasta* can sometimes get a person out of jail. But he explained that this practice is limited in two ways: first, there is a three-strike system. If someone is

¹²Palestinian female, interview with the author, April 14, 2015.

¹³Palestinian female, interview with the author, April 15, 2015.

¹⁴Palestinian female, interview with the author, April 14, 2015.

arrested for a crime, usually on the first and second *wasta* intercessions he will be released by the police, but if he is caught a third time, they will decide he is a 'bad apple' and needs to be prosecuted. Second, tribal leaders are conscious of their reputation. Therefore, they will not want to ask for someone's release if the crime is serious; they might ask for the release of someone who purchased drugs, for instance, but not the one who sold the drugs. In this way, they will see themselves as protecting their family without appearing to support a culture of drugs or delinquency in the country.¹⁵

4.2.2 *Wasta* in the Lives of Young Jordanians

Young Jordanians see *wasta* all around them. They face choices related to *wasta* at the university and getting jobs, they discuss *wasta* with their friends, and they see its use everyday, at school, in their families, and in their political system. "The whole country is *wasta*" is a common refrain among Jordanians, especially the young. Without exception, the young people I interviewed saw *wasta* as a negative influence on both small and large scales. To them, *wasta* promotes injustice in society and incompetence in leadership. Though all would prefer for Jordan to discard the practice of *wasta*, they are uncertain such change is possible.

Those who were students, or recent graduates, complained about *wasta* at their universities. They described a culture of laziness, because many students got into the university because of *wasta*, are assured of good grades because of it, and have a guaranteed job of some kind waiting after graduation. They feel that, because of this, many of their peers do not need to study very hard. One phone call to the dean will change a grade, for instance. One Palestinian respondent lamented that she often feels that she is the only one who

¹⁵East Bank male, interview with the author, April 15, 2015.

spends time studying.¹⁶ Another respondent said, “working hard is only for people who don’t have *wasta*.”¹⁷ By way of an anecdote, I was once talking to a professor friend of mine when a student openly admitted to him that, in a previous course she had taken with him, her father had called the university to get her grade increased. The student had no shame about the situation, mirroring the feelings of many of my interview respondents about *wasta* on campus: that those who have it use it without any bother to their consciences, and sometimes openly flaunt it.

It is important to note that even though complaints about *wasta* on campus, and accusations of laziness, were not leveled directly at East Bank students, it might have been the implication. Many young Palestinian respondents who expressed these views of resentment noted that government jobs were the likely destination for lazy students with *wasta*. Since government jobs are mostly the domain of East Bankers, the students may have been implying that their East Bank colleagues were lazy and not hard working without wanting to state it openly. They may have considered it easier to criticize the tribal system (which, as I noted, they did fairly openly) as opposed to calling out individual East Bankers among their fellow students.

Respondent complaints about laziness were not limited to universities, however. Several respondents described the whole of Jordanian society as lazy. Buses do not come on any particular schedule, government projects get delayed, and people show up late for appointments. One in particular noted the notorious use of “*inshallah*” among her fellow Jordanians. *Inshallah* literally means “if God wills it,” and has its roots in Muhammad’s exhortation to his followers to trust every promise they make to God’s will, not their own. The phrase is normally understood in Jordan, however, as a way of saying, “Well, I may

¹⁶Palestinian female, interview with the author, April 15, 2015.

¹⁷East Bank female, interview with the author, April 23, 2015.

follow through, or I may not.” Another respondent said she felt noticeably different during a short study abroad experience in Canada. She felt the pressure to be productive and hardworking, a pressure that she says disappeared on her return to Jordan. (As a result, she is choosing to leave Jordan to begin her career since her family is able to do that financially.)¹⁸ Respondents, particularly Palestinians, expressed that this laziness comes from *wasta*. One asked what the point is of someone with *wasta* working hard if everything will be handed to them; on the other hand, there is no point in working hard if you don’t have *wasta*, because you know you can’t get what you want through competence alone anyway.¹⁹

Respondents feel that attitudes such as these penetrate deeply into Jordanian society. Because of the realization that getting ahead is not tied to hard work, people are not raised to work hard; from an early age, children understand that some people have privileges and some do not, and that these differences determine the ability of an individual to get ahead. One respondent argued that children are groomed for government jobs from a young age. This does not mean that they are trained to work hard for government service, however, but to keep their backgrounds clean!²⁰

4.2.3 *Wasta* and Fairness

For my interview respondents, and for the many Jordanians I have talked to in even short conversations about *wasta*, *wasta* is primarily an issue of fairness and justice. Or, more specifically, a deficiency in both. In most cases, *wasta* involves getting something you don’t deserve, because you happen to know the right person or people, or have the right

¹⁸Palestinian female, interview with the author, April 4, 2015.

¹⁹Palestinian male, interview with the author, April 25, 2015.

²⁰Palestinian female, interview with the author, April 4, 2015.

last name, or come from the right area. One gave an illustrative analogy as his definition of *wasta*. He described a hypothetical situation in which famed soccer player Lionel Messi works his way up a soccer field, expertly dodging and evading defenders, using all the skills he has honed over his career. However, on nearing the goal, Messi passes the ball to an obscure player who has been standing around doing nothing. That player then scores and gets all the credit, from the adulation of fans to praise from commentators and the press. In his example, that obscure player who did nothing is someone who uses *wasta*.²¹

These narratives of unfairness and injustice, as I noted, impact nearly all facets of Jordanians' lives. Respondents lament that they cannot be sure that the police will respond when they call them, that they will receive medical care if they seek it, or that they will get into a university ahead of those who scored lower on the national placement test. Many respondents gave relevant anecdotes, about needing a powerful relative to call someone high up in the Public Security Directorate to get the police to investigate after their car was stolen, or knowing students who did not meet the minimum criteria to get into their university but did anyway. One respondent from a large tribe in Irbid said he needs to use *wasta* "at least once a day," and that people often have to use *wasta* just to get the rights that they are entitled to under the law.²² Nearly any Jordanian, upon hearing that I study *wasta*, told me some anecdote or another about how it had hurt them, or how they had been forced to use *wasta* to exercise their legal rights.

It was clear from my interviews that there is a difference between "good *wasta*" and "bad *wasta*." Most *wasta* falls into the latter category; this kind of *wasta* is bad because it gives something to people who do not deserve it, and takes away something from people who do deserve them. Someone getting a job they're not qualified for because they have

²¹East Bank male, interview with the author, April 28, 2015.

²²East Bank male, interview with the author, March 30, 2015.

a powerful relative is, perhaps, the textbook example of “bad *wasta*” in Jordan. “Good *wasta*,” on the other hand, is less common but still important. *Wasta* qualifies as “good” when it is used to obtain something you do deserve, but which is being denied to you for some reason. One person gave an example: her friend was involved a car accident and the insurance company of the other driver, who was guilty, was supposed to pay her 250 Jordanian dinars according to the wording of the insurance policy. The company instead offered her 100 dinars. She resorted to using her *wasta* connections in order to get the company to follow their own stated policy.²³

One issue is that “good” or “bad” *wasta* often depends on perspective. Good *wasta*, much like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. One woman reported that she got into her university by using *wasta* even though her entrance test scores were not high enough, and gave this as an example of good *wasta*. She believed she deserved a place at the university, perhaps because she felt the test was not fair, or not an accurate measure of her ability.²⁴ However, it’s very likely that another person looking at that use of *wasta* would be inclined to call it bad *wasta*, because this woman got a benefit (in this case, a place at the university) that she did not deserve according to the stated criteria for that benefit. Similarly, in any given situation when someone is accused of using bad *wasta*, they would likely present some sort of justification for why their use of *wasta* was not bad. Several respondents expressed the belief that some people who have and use a lot of *wasta* simply feel that because their family is prominent, they must deserve the benefit they receive as a result. (Such a situation is reminiscent of discussions on “privilege” in the United States and the questionable assertion that “if I got something, I must have earned and deserved it.”) This reality presents a challenge to confronting the use of *wasta* in Jordan without

²³East Bank female, interview with the author, August 6, 2015.

²⁴East Bank female, interview with the author, April 23, 2015.

referring to some sort of set standards. There simply are not set ethical standards upon which everyone agrees, or these standards are at odds with each other.

4.2.4 *Wasta*, Politics, and Citizenship

These views on *wasta* directly impact the way that Jordanians relate to their role in politics and Jordan's future, as well. As I noted above, there is a pervasive sense of disengagement among Palestinian respondents. They are less likely to vote (which mirrors broader trends among Palestinians I cite in the previous chapter) and less likely to follow politics and the news. Many say they don't feel qualified to participate in political discussions. Some say they discuss politics with their friends, and note that *wasta* is the first thing to come up in these discussions, but none translate those discussions into further action. Other say they don't bother discussing politics, because it only leads to fights with their friends. One noted that she doesn't watch the news, but that her father does, and the only result that comes out of it is that he yells at the television! She suggested that maybe young people like her would start paying attention to politics when they get to be her father's age and have nothing better to do.²⁵

Young East Bankers were also not very involved in politics, but they had a more confident understanding of how politics works, even though they were just as likely as their Palestinian counterparts to acknowledge they don't like the inefficiency, lack of transparency, and incompetence they see in their government. They are able to articulate how their families and tribes select which candidates they will support, what issues they can discuss with their members of parliament, and how corruption plays out. I will describe these issues in greater detail in the next chapter. Despite their greater confidence with political issues, however, it is not clear whether East Bank respondents consider themselves

²⁵ Palestinian female, interview with the author, April 23, 2015.

any more likely to be able to impact Jordan's future. As I will note below, both East Bankers and Palestinians were resigned to having little role in politics and were prepared for a slow process of political reform that is mostly out of their hands.

Overall, the idea that an individual can impact the political system did not resonate among my respondents. They see politics as an activity that goes on behind closed doors, and among those who are older and more experienced than they are. Voting was the only way most respondents could think of participating in politics when I asked them. As I noted, most of the Palestinians do not vote, complaining that most MP's come from the tribes, and that the tribes decide among themselves whom their candidates will be. However, a few insisted they did vote out of civic duty. One female respondent voted for a woman candidate whom she knew to be very qualified from a long career in education. This candidate subsequently won (unusually, she won outright as opposed to gaining a seat as part of the women's quota that was imposed to ensure a minimum number of female MP's) and has been very effective in issues related to education and young people.²⁶ This respondent's situation (that is, having a highly-qualified candidate run and win a meaningful election in a district) was not usual among my interviewees, however. One put it quite bluntly when she said, "I don't vote because no one represents me."²⁷

East Bank respondents reported that they do vote, and cast the vote they are expected to cast for their family or tribe's preferred candidate. Even these East Bank respondents, however, acknowledged that voting is the extent of their political participation. They do not approach their MP's with issues, "and he wouldn't listen if I did," one reported.²⁸ MP's are there to provide *wasta* and influence, which aligns completely with the literature

²⁶East Bank female, interview with the author, April 23, 2015.

²⁷Palestinian female, interview with the author, March 22, 2015.

²⁸East Bank male, interview with the author, April 15, 2015.

on *wasta* I cite in other chapters. While East Bankers and Palestinians both seem to feel distant from politics personally, East Bankers do not express the kind of despondency and hopelessness about their inability to shape political affairs that was evident among their Palestinian counterparts. The attitude of East Bankers seemed more akin to, “Well, that’s just the way it is.”

4.3 FADFED Results

As I noted in Chapter 2, the second qualitative methodology I use is data from Leaders of Tomorrow’s FADFED initiative. FADFED places sheets of paper in public places and allows individuals to write their comments on certain questions, which are chosen in advance. Individuals are handed a marker whose color depends on their demographic category (blue for male under 30, black for male over 30, red for female under 30, green for female over 30). Participants are given minimal instruction, other than that they are free to answer the questions being asked (or not answer them) as they choose. At FADFED events, a small number of questions (ordinarily four) are available, so that participants do not feel overwhelmed.

Leaders of Tomorrow debuted FADFED, which translates to “Speak Out” or “Let it Out” in Arabic, in 2010 and has further developed it since. The goal of FADFED is to give Jordanians a chance to voice their views on important, often controversial, issues impacting the Kingdom and their lives. FADFED contains elements of quantitative and qualitative research. Using this tool, Leaders of Tomorrow can solicit opinions from a large number of people in a small amount of time, similar to a survey or opinion poll. Unlike a survey or poll, however, FADFED gives respondents the ability to provide an open-ended response with greater depth and nuance than quantitative means normally allow. FADFED shares many elements with focus group research; however, while in focus groups an individual or

opinion may dominate the conversation and discourage some people from participating, FADFED gives equal voice to all who choose to write their thoughts.

FADFED events are always held in large public spaces in order to foster discussion and raise awareness of the issues at hand. Sites for FADFED are selected because they are hubs of foot traffic and hence allow a more representative sample of individuals to take part. An ideal FADFED location will be a place where people would ordinarily spend time, which provides a comfortable environment in which people feel at ease expressing their views honestly and openly. Rainbow Street, a popular street in Amman with ample restaurants, cafes, and gathering places, would be an example of a good FADFED site. Universities are also common sites as they are the center of life for so many young people, as well as the locus of social activism among young Jordanians.

FADFED has been well-received since Leaders of Tomorrow first deployed it as a research tool in 2010. FADFED events often draw large crowds, which make participants feel safe, among others who are similarly interested in voicing their opinions. They also do not feel pressure of being monitored or censored by anyone that a small gathering might cause. The organization is conscious of the efforts of the state intelligence service, the *mukhabarat*, to intervene in their events; though the *mukhabarat* often make their presence known to event coordinators, they are unable to impact the proceedings because of the large numbers in the crowd and the anonymity of responses. (The only *mukhabarat* intervention, which happened some time ago, involved a comment that mentioned the King specifically. They were satisfied when the comment was taken down.) FADFED staff and volunteers go out of their way to help participants, answering any questions that may arise, and assuring them that Leaders of Tomorrow values their input and opinions.

As part of the organization's ongoing project studying the relationship between *wasta* and identity in Jordan, Leaders of Tomorrow held three FADFED events between November

2014 and June 2015 in three Jordanian governorates: Mafraq, Amman, and Karak. (Mafraq is in Jordan's north while Karak can perhaps be considered the heart of Jordan's south. Amman, the capital, is something of a dividing line between the two and is usually thought of as a region on its own due to its size as home to up to half the country's population.) The attendance for the three events was more than 100 people; 76 chose to write answers to questions but many more than that observed without taking part. I was an observer at the events in Amman and Karak, and I was given access to data from all three events while serving as a volunteer research associate with Leaders of Tomorrow.

4.3.1 FADFED Data Overview

Visitors were asked to respond to two questions in each FADFED event: 1) "What is *wasta* and how has it affected you, positively or negatively?" and 2) "What is the origin of *wasta*?" Fully 97% of respondents at all events reported that *wasta* affects them negatively; only two individuals out of 76 disagreed. Two individuals specifically used the term "stain" to describe *wasta*. Many responses implicated the tribes, in addition to those from the previous question. One respondent called *wasta* "the downfall of excellence and creativity." Another charged that *wasta* "stifles intellectual activity." Responses to this question, as with the question on *wasta*'s origin, were heavily laden with accusations that *wasta* is "unjust," "takes your rights away," and "challenges freedom," with others adding that *wasta* is "repression," "tyranny," and "a dangerous disease." Some went as far as to write that they were "ashamed of *wasta*" or that "*wasta* ruined my life."

As I note above, only two individuals gave unambiguously positive reviews to *wasta*. One wrote, "I like *wasta* and it's very useful." The other answered the question about *wasta*'s positive or negative nature by saying, "Positive, because I take the solution into my own hands without any problem." One additional respondent gave a vague answer

(“Is there anything better than *wasta*?”) that could be supporting *wasta* as a positive thing, but could also have been sarcasm. Two additional respondents wrote that *wasta* is positive if you have it and negative if you don’t. Both positive comments, notably, focused on *wasta*’s role in their own lives as opposed to its impact on society as a whole. Some of those opposed to *wasta*, as we have shown, criticized *wasta* as harmful to the personally, while many others complained about the social and collective negative impact of *wasta* in the Kingdom. (In other words, no one defended *wasta* as a good thing for the country as a whole.)

Of the 75 people in Amman, Mafrq, and Karak who wrote a response to the question, “Where does *wasta* come from?” twenty mentioned the government or the tribes specifically. One wrote that *wasta* comes from “a preference for tribalism over competence.” Mention of tribes or tribalism was particularly pronounced in the northern city of Mafrq, where eight of nineteen respondents gave that answer as the source of *wasta*. Seven others asserted that *wasta* originates from “selfishness,” “greed,” or a lack of justice or fairness. Several individuals wrote that they believe *wasta* was endemic in Arab culture or that it has existed “since the beginning of history.” If the wording of the question had asked about the institutional source of *wasta*, rather than its psychological roots, it is entirely possible that even more people than twenty would have cited the government and the tribes.

Respondents sometimes chose, within the context of these two questions, to voice their concerns that *wasta* is not going away. “If there was no *wasta*, time would stop; it’s not going to happen,” one said. Another said, “we can’t live without *wasta*.” Another noted “[w]e have reached a stage where we cannot get rid of it for even the simplest things in our lives.” Most respondents, however, chose to focus more directly on the questions about *wasta*’s roots and its present role. Still, some of these responses seemed to indicate despondency about *wasta*’s dominant role, and perhaps its staying power. One said, simply,

“the whole country is *wasta*.” Only one respondent chose to look towards the possibility of a future without *wasta*: “[l]ife without *wasta* would be just, as God intended it!”

FADFED allows for brief responses as well as ones that provide a bit more information or nuance. For example, the writer of the quote that ends the previous paragraph wrote two sentences in full: “[*Wasta*] isn’t just and its impact is negative and it causes divisions among people! Life without *wasta* would be just (fair), as God intended it!” Just these two sentences contain a great deal of information, about *wasta*’s status as a positive or negative thing, an opinion we did not explicitly solicit about *wasta*’s role in creating enmity between people, and also, as noted above, a bit of speculation about how life would look without *wasta*. One particularly elaborate contribution compared the original meaning of the word *wasta* with its current use: “Its origins are as ‘mediation between two parties’ and it was a good word. Because of ills in society, the word’s meaning has changed to the current meaning of the word ‘*wasta*.’” One respondent elected to insert humor into her response, writing, “I’m ashamed I don’t benefit from it!” followed immediately by, “No, honestly, I’m ashamed of it in all circumstances.” Thus, FADFED not only allows respondents freedom to provide whatever information they choose, it can give us a glimpse into the personalities of respondents, depending on how much of their personalities they want to reveal.

Examining the results at the three sites, there are broad similarities. Respondents in all three cities criticized the tribes and government at a similar rate, with at least one-third of respondents mentioning either or both explicitly. Many more responses could have implicated one or both institutions (eg, “from the lack of justice and the sovereignty of law”). The two positive assessments of *wasta* came from Amman, with one individual in Karak and one in Amman noting they felt *wasta* is good if one has it. The overall sentiment at all three sites was the view that *wasta* is a negative thing and is damaging for Jordanian

society. Responses in Mafrq were more likely to reference university *wasta*, likely because the event was held at a university. Responses in Amman were noticeably more detailed and nuanced, and were much more evenly distributed across age and gender groups. These results likely reflect Amman's size and the presence of a larger pool of engaged and educated residents. Our results in Karak were smaller in number; this outcome was most likely due to organizational difficulties with the public debate at which the FADFED event was held, as well as high winds that made keeping the FADFED sheets in one place a challenge.

4.3.2 *Wasta*, Politics, and Citizenship: Evidence from FADFED

In order to learn more about *wasta*'s impact on an individual's identity as a citizen, we need to look beyond comments that view *wasta* negatively to examine what these comments say about the individual's attitudes on Jordan's society and government. As I noted above, almost all respondents reported they felt *wasta* had a negative impact on themselves and society. Some said they felt ashamed of *wasta*, or even ashamed of their societies. Many respondents explicitly cited the government as the source of *wasta*, and many referred to *wasta* as unjust, unfair, and a form of corruption. One respondent expressed a common sentiment among FADFED respondents, and other Jordanians I interviewed, when he wrote that *wasta* "creates opportunities for those who don't deserve them and takes them from those who do deserve them."

These negative opinions on *wasta*, society, and government suggest that citizens do not view Jordan's political system as healthy. Further, many responses on the FADFED boards suggest that, because of *wasta*, they do not take political participation seriously. Someone who believes that "*wasta* is the product of a failing society" or that *wasta* comes from "leaders who don't want transparency, justice, or morals" is unlikely to consider Jordan to be a healthy democracy where voicing one's views can actually lead to change. One

respondent, after noting that *wasta* comes from the government, said in contrast that “I am the government,” which may mean he seeks a more direct role in Jordan’s political future (although his comment is somewhat abstract and might be interpreted in several ways). Thus, we can see evidence from this FADFED data that a sense of Jordanian identity and citizenship, among both East Bankers and Palestinians, may be weak and uncertain.

The FADFED responses also touch on the matter of tribal identity and awareness. It is not possible to attach responses to individuals, and thus we cannot see direct connections between those who cited tribes as a source (or the source) of *wasta* to those who said *wasta* was negative. However, though we do not know specific responses, we do know that 97% of respondents reported *wasta* has a negative impact. Since only two individuals said *wasta* was a positive thing, but more than two respondents pointed to the tribes, at least some of those who named the tribes as the source of *wasta* did so in an accusatory, negative way. We have no way of knowing whether these respondents were from tribes themselves as opposed to Palestinian, Circassian, or Chechen, but these responses suggest that respondents view the role of the tribes as negative. This finding calls into question the idea that tribal identity and the customs of the tribal system are adequate to sustain the *wasta* system, as the *wasta* literature I cited earlier suggests.

Finally, we can use FADFED data to examine the role that gender and age play in how individual Jordanian citizens view *wasta*. The responses of men and women were remarkably similar. Both men and women had similar response rates when discussing the tribes, the government, the rule of law, and society. One marked difference was in the discussion of justice and fairness. Women were much more likely to use the term “justice” or “social justice” than were men. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to talk about *wasta* in terms of the “rights” that it takes away from those who deserve them. Still, if

we consider “rights” and “justice” to be similar concepts of fairness, both men and women had almost identical response rates on the issue of fairness, even if they seem to conceive of it in different ways.

While men and women show notable similarities, the same cannot be said for younger versus older respondents. Younger people were twice as likely to blame the government for the existence of *wasta* in Jordan, and were five times as likely to explicitly call *wasta* a form of corruption. Most remarkably, while only one respondent over the age of thirty cited the tribes or tribalism as a source of *wasta*, twelve respondents under thirty did so. These findings provide evidence that young people may view *wasta* in much more explicitly political ways than do their elders. Combined with the findings I cite above about poor citizenship and the possibility of dissent from tribal and cultural norms that support *wasta*, a politicization of youth could suggest difficulties to come for the *wasta* system and those who support it. If such opinions do not change, young people may continue not just to oppose the *wasta* system, but those institutions that promote it; they may even turn to open opposition, questioning some of the most secure foundations of Jordanian society. Such opposition could prove, at the very least, a distraction for Jordan’s government as it seeks to address the pressing challenges that face the Kingdom both from without and from within.

4.4 Analysis of Qualitative Data

It is clear that has poisonous influences across Jordan’s political system: it weakens the electoral system, leading to ineffective oversight from MP’s who constituents ostensibly chose to be their voice in government. It also warps the relationship between MP and constituent, and between citizen and civil servant. It is generally understood that parliamentarians do not work for all the people they represent, but for those who happen to

be part of their patronage network. The job of the civil servant is not to provide social services fairly and effectively to all Jordanians, as the Kingdom's laws stipulate. Rather, the civil servant's role is to make bureaucratic interactions easier for those in his or her network, or those to whom he or she owes favors. Everyone else must languish in red tape and roadblocks.

From the interview data and FADFED data, we can draw several themes regarding the relationship between *wasta* and Jordan's political system: demands for fairness and the rule of law, the relationship of tribe/ethnic identity and citizenship, and the potential for generational shifts away from *wasta* as an accepted cultural norm. These three themes point to possible weaknesses in the *wasta* system that the current theoretical understanding of *wasta* has not yet appreciated. As I will discuss in the next chapter, there is by no means a guarantee that the *wasta* system will diminish or disappear, and in fact there remain significant obstacles to reforming the political system to reduce the impact of *wasta*, but *wasta* may take on a more destabilizing role that could augment challenges that the Jordanian government already faces.

Wasta and Citizenship/Political Identity. As I note in Chapter 2, there is the tendency in the *wasta* literature to this point to consider *wasta* a cultural phenomenon particular to the tribal system. The implication is that *wasta* exists perhaps entirely within tribal and kinship networks, or at the very least, that loyalty to kinship identity overrules the grumbling against *wasta* that anyone familiar with the Middle East region has heard many times before. As I have argued, the assumption that *wasta*'s effects do not at least spill over into the realm of government is doubtful. In fact, from my interviews it is clear that citizens very much associate *wasta* with their governments, and that there are very definite tensions among forms of kinship, ethnic, and national identities.

It is undeniable that *wasta* is closely connected to the tribal system. Tribes and kinship

connections are the primary determinant of who has *wasta* and who does not. Individual Jordanians are raised with the knowledge that they are expected to appeal to powerful family members for assistances in many circumstances. However, the matter becomes much more complicated because *wasta* normally takes the form of the provision of benefits that are the realm of government (eg, civil service jobs, placements at public universities, smoothing red tape in offices within the bureaucracy). *Wasta* is ultimately directed from the government to the people using the tribes as a medium, and that reality is not lost on Jordanian citizens. If a Jordanian cannot get a job without appealing to a relative in the army to intercede, it reflects badly not on the person's tribe, but on the civil service. If another Jordanian cannot get police to respond to a crime without having a tribal shaykh call the police station, that does not reflect badly on the tribe, but on the police (a branch of the Ministry of the Interior). If a Jordanian wants to see a certain policy debated in parliament but her MP will not listen because they were selected not on qualifications but as a vehicle for providing *wasta* to their tribe, this reflects badly on the parliamentary system. In many cases, the tribe benefits from the use *wasta*, because successful exercises of *wasta* enhance the prestige of both the tribe and the *wasta*, but in every case the government loses because its built-in inefficiencies are exposed.

As I note above, discussions of *wasta* always implicated the tribal system in one way or another. However, it was clear from my respondents, and from the FADFED participants, that occasions of *wasta* serve as a reminder that government does not work as it should. No matter how closely or loyally a Jordanian might feel to his or her respective tribe (and several respondents suspected these loyalties are beginning to weaken noticeably among the young), all Jordanians live in a polity larger than the tribe, and their identity reflects this reality as well. Without a doubt, such identity conflicts are more of an issue for Jordanians of Palestinian descent, but even tribal Jordanians I interviewed cited the need for a unified

Jordanian identity. The recent challenges Jordan has faced from wars and instability on each of its borders, the dramatic influx of refugees from Syria due to the civil war there, and uneven economic development within the East Bank and Palestinian communities that has grown in the past decade only exacerbate these tensions.

I noted in Chapter 2 the surprising lack of consideration the *wasta* literature gives to groups that exist outside of tribal networks in Arab countries. In the case of Jordan, the absence of Palestinian Jordanians from the discussion is a glaring weakness. Many Palestinians have roots in tribes, but the settled nature of Palestine, compared to the nomadic nature of the territory that eventually became Jordan, over the course of several centuries led to identification with cities and towns more than families or kinship groups. Palestinian Jordanians will almost invariably identify with the city in Palestine from which their family comes when asked about their background (East Bank Jordanians will also often note the traditional home of their tribe if the tribe has one, but the connection is primarily with the tribe rather than the town). Palestinians I spoke with also were likely to express that they were made to feel “less Jordanian” than their East Bank counterparts. Indeed, the Jordanian government has often exalted Bedouin cultural traditions; examples include the prevalence in formal state ceremonies of the red-and-white Jordanian *keffiyeh* (traditional headscarf) rather than the black-and-white one worn among Palestinians, or the King’s personal guard, who dress in Bedouin military attire dating to the British mandate era.

Thus, there are more considerations than tribal identity when it comes to the role of *wasta* in Jordan. Regardless of their background, Jordanians look to the national government for services they need on a daily basis. They seek a livelihood to support themselves and their families, security and protection from their government and police, health care when they need it, and good schools for their children. Arguably, they share these desires

with people in any political system worldwide. When they inevitably run into obstacles obtaining these desires due to the need to exercise *wasta* in order to get them, they express frustration and blame the government for holding them back. Further, they find they have no place to turn for recourse: the executive branch that administers services is the source of the problem and has little accountability, the legislature exercises little oversight and at any rate is understood to be a vehicle for *wasta* rather than a means of breaking the system down, and the courts have been designed to deal with criminal issues and rarely delve into matters of accountability.

Further, Jordanian citizens are usually unable to articulate clearly what they individually could do to improve this political system. Other than voting, which Lust and others have already established is ineffective as a means of changing the system, questions about what options are open to them were normally met with silence. Respondents complained they were trained from a young age not to ask these questions or to question their government. They report that the educational system favors rote memorization over critical thinking; even university students expressed awe at an American colleague who presented a step-by-step research proposal, and lamented their “wasted” four years which left them unable to think through problems and solutions. (The small number of Jordanians I interviewed who were educated in private schools noted that the situation is vastly different there: their schools have focused strongly, especially since the Arab Spring, on critical thinking and coming up with solutions to societal problems. But the situation appears to remain stagnant outside these elite schools.)

Demands for fairness from government. Among my interview subjects as well as respondents in the FADFED project, there was a clear sense that *wasta* a deeply unfair system. This finding will shock no one who has spent any time in the Arab world. However, researchers studying the region have failed to grasp to this point the role that *wasta*

plays in shaping the views of citizens toward their government. Further, debates over the potential for democratic reforms in the Arab world in recent years have often asked whether Arabs (and/or Muslims) are “different” in the expectations they have with respect to governance. Maybe they aren’t ready for democracy, goes the thinking, or don’t want it at all. Maybe they want to be subject to an authoritarian government due to their cultural expectations of tribal governance.

The data I discuss above suggest the opposite, however. Jordanians, especially youth, are able to clearly articulate that they feel their government is failing them because of its role in upholding the *wasta* system. Many of them said in their view that their leaders routinely subvert the law in order to benefit themselves and their *wasta* networks. The overwhelming view was that this situation is normal and expected, which should not be surprising given that it has in fact been the norm since the founding of an Emirate of Transjordan in 1920. Strikingly, however, my respondents did not equate these expectations with support or even ambivalence. Despite the fact that *wasta* is an established institution tied deeply to the executive, legislative, and judicial functions of government, my respondents were openly hostile to this situation.

The agreement among interview respondents on this issue was striking, as was the consistency with which they cited fairness and the rule of law as expectations they had as Jordanian citizens. Some cited constitutional provisions granting all citizens equal access and voice in government. Others spoke more generally about their perception that lawmakers routinely create loopholes in the laws to give their friends advantages that should be illegal. It seemed to me that whenever discussions in my interviews turned to the issue of what Jordanian citizens ought to expect from their governments, answers took on what Max Weber termed “rational-legal” arguments regarding political legitimacy. Jordanians I spoke with, especially young Jordanians, felt that government ought to be serving citizens

fairly and equitably, giving them equal voice and access regardless of whom they happen to know within the government bureaucracy, legislative branch, or military.

Wasta and Young Jordanians. As I note in Chapter 2, I chose to sample Jordanians between the ages of 18 and 35 because of their large demographic size, the fact that they face *wasta* issues perhaps more acutely than their elders because they are looking for jobs or have recently done a job search, and because of the restiveness of Jordanian youth during the Arab Spring protests. Jordanians in this age range did consider themselves different in views from their elders when it came to *wasta*, as I will discuss below. Further, from Leaders of Tomorrow's FADFED data we have additional evidence of differences between respondents who are above and below the age of 30. The data from both of these sources suggest that traditional identity ties are loosening and that young Jordanians may be becoming more political in opposition to government practices than their parents' generation was.

I note when discussing the FADFED data above that Jordanians below 30 were markedly more likely to frame *wasta* in political terms than were their elder counterparts. While my interview sample intentionally focuses on younger Jordanians, my interview subjects also believed they were different than the previous generation. They overwhelmingly saw their generation as more concerned with democracy and rights. As evidence, they cited the fact that they and their younger siblings had grown up with debates about women's rights and education, to name two examples, that had been absent even fifteen years ago or less. They seem to associate their parents' generation with the current political class; the young Palestinian woman who noted her father does nothing political beyond yelling at the television sounded a lot like the majority of respondents, who feel embarrassed to watch parliamentary debates on television because they generally devolve into unproductive screaming matches. Most respondents said, in one way or another, that once the

closed-minded older generation has passed from the scene, their generation can break the bonds of *wasta* and reform the country.

It is entirely possible to counter that every generation of young people feels different, expressing idealism and passion, but that as young people age they find themselves unable to move beyond the current way of doing things. (Path dependence research in social science argues that changing institutions happens only incrementally because doing so is costly and goes against deeply-ingrained expectations.) However, a number of experts I interviewed reinforced that this generation of young Jordanians may in fact be different. One longtime American observer of Jordanian society noted, “The tribal *shaykhs* all complain to me that the young people don’t care about what they have to say. They’re all moving away from traditional tribal hierarchy and culture.”²⁹ Another researcher noted that because of the economic challenges that young Jordanians are facing, getting a job and supporting a family are becoming more important than worrying about what their families or tribes think or do.³⁰ It is still uncommon for young female Jordanians to live outside the family home before marriage, but young male Jordanians leaving the confines of family in favor of an apartment on their own (or with friends) is becoming more commonplace, largely because of economic necessity.

Particularly in the Palestinian community, there seems to be a growing sense of frustration with the political system. While Palestinian tensions are nothing new (Jordan experienced a civil war in 1970-71 that centered largely around the Palestinian national movement), the current formal political institutions of the Kingdom are increasingly disappointing Palestinians. The promise of elections in 1989 has been essentially squashed

²⁹Alain McNamara, interview with the author, May 19, 2015.

³⁰Dr. Lucine Taminian, interview with the author, June 9, 2015.

among the majority Palestinian community due to electoral gerrymandering and the dominance of *wasta* in voting within districts, which unfairly favors the tribes. One young Palestinian noted that often 80-90% of MP's are East Bankers, despite the fact that perhaps 40% of the population is estimated to be of East Bank tribal origin.³¹ Rural areas, which are predominately tribal, have disproportionately more representation than do the cities where Palestinians tend to live; further, there has been a great deal of leeway in allowing even East Bank Jordanians who live in cities to vote in rural areas where their tribe historically is based, even if they have no actual connection to that area anymore. In short, the twenty-five year experiment with electoral politics has proven a serious letdown for Palestinian youth who have grown up under it. *Wasta* is the primary culprit: maintaining the numerical dominance of the tribes in parliament ensures that as many tribes as possible have prestige and access to patronage and influence.

Further, the need to maintain this tribal patronage vis-a-vis the Palestinians has only grown in recent years. Palestinians have always dominated the private sector (both due to their business background before their relocation to Jordan and because they have always been mostly excluded from the public sector); due to an influx of wealthy Iraqis and foreign cash from the United States and the Gulf during King Abdullah II's reign, Jordan has seen a boom in private sector development. Opulent new malls and large office buildings have changed the cityscape of Amman, and plans are afoot for huge growth at the Dead Sea and in Aqaba as well. These developments have led to grumbling on the part of the East Bank community, who ask "Where's our share?"³² For them, the situation has barely changed. A poor state-run education system has led to serious unemployment and underemployment

³¹ Palestinian male, interview with the author, September 14, 2015.

³² Dr. Sami Hourani, interview with the author, March 18, 2015.

problems among the young, as young Jordanians prove ill-equipped to enter the better-paying but more demanding private sector workforce, and the public sector has shown itself to be unable to innovate. Public transportation projects (such as a long-promised Bus Rapid Transit project along a congested corridor in the capital) have come up short, and government enterprises such as Royal Jordanian Airlines have posted huge losses.

An impetus for reform seems to be worryingly absent among tribal leaders, especially those in rural areas. In 2013, Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic* published a widely-read article on King Abdullah after spending a great deal of time interviewing and observing him. In a particularly striking scene from this article, the King flies Goldberg to the city of Karak in the south to meet with tribal leaders, whom the King terms “the dinosaurs.” King Abdullah makes a presentation to the Karak tribal leaders on issues such as the need to diversify the economy and realize the benefits of information technology. When it comes time for the tribal leaders to speak, one suggests that in order to combat unemployment, Karak return to the practice of giving young men sticks and paying them to walk around the city at night as patrolmen. The King, and Goldberg, worry about the potential of tribes to get on board with real reform if “young men with sticks” is their best idea for moving forward.³³ Such an anecdote may not be representative of tribal leaders in general, but according to many of my tribal respondents, such clueless attitudes are all too common among their elders, especially in rural areas.

Thus, young Jordanians are coming of age in a different Jordan than their parents knew. They perceive inequality in income and opportunity to be increasing, and political institutions do not offer them any hope of change. Despite periodic reform efforts, *wasta* and corruption still plague the bureaucracy, and *wasta*’s insidious role has led to a mostly

³³Goldberg, J. (2013, March 6). “The Modern King and the Arab Spring.” *The Atlantic*. Retrieved July 5, 2015 from <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/04/monarch-in-the-middle/309270/>

failed attempt at electoral democracy despite twenty-five years of efforts. Most of the young Jordanians I interviewed cited the problems in Jordan's neighborhood (and the Syrian refugee influx at home) and emphasized the need for Jordanian unity in the face of these challenges. Not surprisingly, Jordanians fear their country becoming a tragic mess like Syria or Iraq, or even like Egypt, which they know to provide even fewer freedoms than they enjoy in Jordan. Were it not for this regional instability, it is entirely possible political grumbling among young Jordanians would be even louder.

4.5 *Wasta's* Change Over Time

From this data, and the information I present in Chapter 2, it is possible to examine the ways the role of *wasta* has changed in Jordan over the course of the Kingdom's history. At the beginnings of the Emirate of Transjordan, King Abdullah I used the distribution of patronage to co-opt the powerful regional tribes. In the absence of any sense of "Jordanian" identity in this brand-new country, he opted to create networks of mutual dependence with the Hashemite monarchy at the center. In this way, *wasta* did not impact the average Jordanian directly; rather, patronage existed at the level of the tribal shaykhs and the highest leaders.

Over time, however, the *wasta* system itself has contributed to the breakdown in traditional tribal roles. Jordan's bureaucracy took on a life of its own. Reciprocal relationships of favors and favoritism led bureaucrats themselves to have a great deal of influence independent of their roles in tribes. In addition, the reliance of the monarchy on the army and intelligence services led to *wasta* and patronage networks within these organizations to rise to the fore. Tribal identity remains the main determinant of *wasta*; that is, one needing *wasta* generally approaches someone in their family or tribe, recognizing that tribal honor binds them to assist. However, the actual centers of power have become more dispersed.

At the same time, the character of Jordanian society changed drastically. Two major waves of Palestinian immigration challenged the social order King Abdullah I had established. *Wasta* and patronage networks that bound the tribes to the regime continued apace, but the regime created no space to incorporate these Palestinian Jordanians. This situation continues today; Palestinian Jordanians are citizens but remain in many ways a class to themselves. They dominate the business community but do not share the influence their East Bank citizens enjoy within the public sector. Thus, as I have noted, they do not share the *wasta*, patronage, and influence that so impacts the lives of East Bankers. Despite the Jordanian constitution's guarantee of equality to all citizens under the law, Palestinians cannot petition their government with the same efficacy as can East Bankers.

Which is not to say that petitioning the government is necessarily easy for East Bankers, either. Parliamentarians and bureaucrats remain entangled in tribal patronage networks and are expected to provide *wasta* benefits to their constituents (i.e., their fellow family and tribe members). Even well-connected East Bankers find they cannot petition the government on matters of policy, however. As I noted above, most members of parliament, on the whole, do not feel responsible to their constituents in matters of national policy. The perception among Jordanians is that many are not competent in this areas even if they were interested in them. Opposition deputies in parliament do raise their voices in debate on policy issues at times, but their numbers are small and they are not well-organized. Therefore, they affect little change.

It is an open question whether this system remains tenable. Political participation has expanded dramatically in the past three decades. The restoration of elections and political parties in the late 1980s and early 1990s brought the promise of increased involvement of Jordanians in their political affairs. By and large, however, this promise has not been realized. Electoral practices (especially the apportionment of districts) slant the system in

favor of (rural) East Bank tribes, despite the fact that Palestinian Jordanians make up a larger share of the population. This gerrymandering, of course, is designed to maintain the access to *wasta* and patronage that has kept the tribes in a mutually dependent relationship with the monarchy since the Kingdom's earliest days. The privileged position of the tribes has also led to laws that discourage strong political parties, a matter I will discuss in the next chapter. Both of these trends have neutered political reform and have led to the continuation of the status quo in which Jordanians have little direct say in their political affairs or the Kingdom's future.

As I have shown in this chapter, this status quo is the subject of considerable frustration the part of Jordanian youth, both East Bank and Palestinian-Jordanian. These youth have grown up in an ostensibly democratic system in which they were able to vote, form political parties, and express themselves in ways previous generations could not. Since the late 1990s, satellite TV channels in the region have made a greater variety of information available to them. In the same time period, independent (non-government) news sources within Jordan, including *Al-Ghad* newspaper and the Ro'ya television channel, have given critical voices a place of prominence in debates on important topics. And of course much has been written about the role of the internet and social media in uniting Jordanians and Arabs, particularly as it relates to mobilization during the Arab Spring protests.

Thus, throughout Jordan's history, political participation has become much more diverse. First, non-tribal leaders came to be centers of patronage and power themselves. Then, an influx of Palestinians greatly expanded the population and added demands for participation. Finally, youth who have grown up during the post-1989 era, in which technology has connected them to each other and to the world and brought new sources of information to them, have further added their voices to a call for "dignity," a desire to be heard and to play a role in Jordan's affairs. At the same time, the system of *wasta* and

patronage has changed very little. Given the size of the youth cohort, and the consistency of their frustration and demands, it is difficult to imagine they will not continue to press for political reforms designed to make Jordan more open and democratic. In Chapter 5, I will discuss reform efforts in greater detail and I will assess the likelihood of their success.

Thus, the overall trend that underlies *wasta*'s role in Jordanian society is an increasing divergence between reality and expectations. As I have noted, the reality of political participation in Jordan has changed very little since Black September and the civil war of 1970-71. *Wasta* still binds the tribes to the regime, East Bank citizens to the tribes, and East Bank citizens to each other. Despite promises that citizens would play a greater role in politics, youth express overwhelmingly the feeling of frustration in being unable to get political officials to listen to them and to care about their needs and aspirations for the Kingdom. At the same time, these youth have grown up in a period marked by an ostensibly tremendous opening in the Kingdom's political system, with the return of elections and legal political parties, and a huge uptick in the number of civil society organizations. Various forms of technology have also opened them to information and relationships that build up expectations of playing an active role in political life. If these expectations of political participation continue to diverge from the reality of the system, it is hard not to imagine a crisis developing as a result.

4.6 Conclusion

It is clear from the evidence provided in this chapter that Jordanians, especially young Jordanians, are frustrated with the *wasta* system and its role in the Kingdom's political institutions. They see it as promoting unfairness and inequality, ineffective executive and legislative institutions, and undermining national identity by exacerbating divisions between East Bankers and Palestinian Jordanians. Cultural and familial ties that have

undergird the *wasta* system may be weakening in the face of economic challenges that have brought new issues to the fore. The promise of democracy has largely stagnated in the last twenty-five years, and Jordan was not immune to the protests that rocked the Arab world in 2011 and 2012. Young Jordanians make up well over two-thirds of the population, and at the same time they find it increasingly difficult to support themselves and maintain a dignified quality of life. They have not been especially politically active, especially since the collapse of the Arab Spring's promise into civil wars in Libya, Iraq, and Syria as well as a hard turn to authoritarianism in Egypt. However, they articulate clear political demands and there is reason to believe restiveness among this generation is increasing even if it has not manifested itself in mobilization to this point.

With all this in mind, what are the prospects for Jordan's political future? Indeed, Jordan's leadership seems to recognize the insidiousness of *wasta* and the need to reform. In the next chapter, I explore the King's post-Arab Spring reform vision and the reform laws Jordan has debated and implemented in the past year as a result of this vision. Jordanians remain skeptical real change is coming, however, and this skepticism is not unjustified, although Jordan's current reform trajectory may be the most promising the Kingdom has experienced in its history.

Chapter 5

Wasta and Political Reform in Jordan

In the previous two chapters, I outlined the tensions surrounding *wasta* and politics among Jordanians. I gave both statistical and qualitative evidence that *wasta* causes frustration because Jordanians see it as leading to unfair access to government services, as well as political institutions that do not care about their needs and are not responsive to them. I suggested that, because of Jordan's youth bulge and the assorted problems facing young Jordanians at present, the challenges *wasta* poses to the government's effectiveness and very legitimacy may only increase. In this chapter, I will discuss the potential for political reform, with particular attention to the potential for *wasta*'s role in politics to change. I will outline both the King's post-2011 reform vision as well as the attempts parliament and the royal court have undertaken to implement it. I will also incorporate interview data that suggests Jordanians are deeply skeptical that the reform program will lead to meaningful change.

5.1 The Context of Political Reform in Jordan

The literature on *wasta*, as well as my qualitative research, points to the benefits Jordan's tribes derive from the continuation of the *wasta* system. An additional challenge to any reform effort, however, is the perverse sense of order and regularity that *wasta* promotes within the government bureaucracy itself. A former government consultant, tasked with

auditing a particular bureaucratic office to uncover why this office functioned so poorly, gives an illustrative example. He notes that he quickly discovered the problem leading this office, staffed by so many people, to cause so many headaches for the citizens who had to deal with it. Furthermore, the head of the office and his subordinates were also completely well aware of the problem as well. The issue at hand was that the head of the office actually wanted the problem to persist. Why? “Because of *wasta*: he wanted to ensure that people had to use *wasta* to get to him.” The problem causing the inefficiency was a simple one to solve, either across the board or in individual cases. But why solve the problem across the board if you can force individuals faced with the inefficiency to use an influential person they know to approach you about fixing it, thereby doing a “favor” for this person and having them in your debt? In this way, the need to amass your own *wasta* to solve your problems entails a perverse incentive whereby you create (or fail to solve) problems for others, forcing them to use their social capital to build yours.¹ On a government bureaucratic level, then, there is a certain regularity and even stability to the pervasive inefficiency of *wasta*.

There is, therefore, a significant incentive to maintain the *wasta* system. Those who would stand to lose from a decrease in reliance on the *wasta* system are at the centers of power of the Jordanian state: the tribes, the security services, the civil service, and legislators. In the case of the latter two, these *wasta* beneficiaries actually make and implement laws, and therefore have a heavy hand in whether any change occurs. The tribes pose a challenge to the King and the Royal Hashemite Court as they seek to maintain stability among Jordan’s powerful forces. Still, the popular uprisings that struck the Arab world in 2011-2012 led the King to unveil a large-scale reform vision; parliament has debated bills related to this reform vision, and passed two of them in 2015.

¹Dr. Moayed al-Windawi, interview with the author, March 25, 2015.

Further, King Abdullah has an uphill battle to convince Jordanian citizens of the actual likelihood of reform. Jordanians have been continually disappointed by promises of political reform, starting in 1989 with the restoration of an elected parliament and the subsequent legalization of political parties. During King Abdullah's own tenure, which began in 1999, political reform has never been far from the center of attention. He has continuously commissioned new prime ministers to bring about greater participation in the political system, an increased role for political parties, greater emphasis on merit over loyalty in staffing the state bureaucracy, and a more open public sphere for journalists, NGOs, and citizen debate. In each instance, powerful interests stymied these efforts. Thus, the King's elaborate reform vision, which he laid out in response to the Arab Spring protests of 2011, risks falling into irrelevance. As I note below, Jordanians are mostly unaware of its existence. However, his promises are beginning to bear fruit in the form of new laws passed; it remains to be seen, however, whether the power of the tribes, army, and intelligence services will be able to disable reforms efforts yet again, even against an upsurge in popular support for greater opening.

5.2 Pre-Arab Spring Attempts at Political Reform

King Abdullah II has promoted political reform and openness on a consistent basis since acceding to the throne in 1999. However, prior to the Arab Spring, not much came of these reform efforts. According to Muasher (2011), "An examination of the political reforms conducted by successive governments in Jordan over the last decade suggests that, in most cases, the king's directives were ignored, diluted, and, at times, directly opposed."² He blames Jordan's elites, who have become hidebound and unwilling to change the systems

²Muasher, M. (2011). "A Decade of Struggling Reform Efforts in Jordan: The Resilience of the Rentier System." The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: 4.

that have brought them to power and kept them there.

The King's initial reform vision was unspecific, and all efforts at reform and privatization were thwarted by his conservative first prime minister, Rauf al-Rawabdeh. Under al-Rawabdeh's successor, the liberal Ali Abu Ragheb, the King's reform vision took more specific shape, as he called for greater efforts at unity between the tribes and Palestinians, a new electoral law, the promotion of political parties and legitimate opposition, and enhancements to press freedom. This period saw the promulgation of the Jordan First Initiative, which promoted many of these ideas, as well as the implementation of a parliamentary quota for women and anti-corruption measures. The quota for women became the only successful element of the initiative. The political establishment, unwilling to embrace reform, successfully convinced the king that regional tensions made immediate reform unwise.³

The King's next prime minister, Faisal al-Faiz, showed enthusiasm about reform initially, but after meeting significant opposition from the political establishment, especially the intelligence services, he began to lower expectations, talking about "administrative reform" rather than full political reform.⁴ By 2005, six years of reform vision on the King's behalf had produced essentially no tangible results. In fact, the parliament passed several laws restricting press and independent organizations that were contradictory to the King's stated reform interests in promoting national dialogue and the public sphere.⁵

By this point, the King had realized that piecemeal efforts at reform were useless, and that the economic reforms he sought would not be viewed as legitimate without a democratic process that could involve citizens and their elected representatives in a meaningful

³Muasher 2011

⁴Muasher 2011: 11

⁵Muasher 2011

way. As a result, he formed a diverse and inclusive committee (in addition to members of the government, the committee included representatives of political parties, women, activists from civil society, media, and the private sector) and gave that committee wide berth to discuss which reforms the Kingdom most needed. Political liberals on the committee sought to completely break the power of the tribes in parliament by switching to a party-dominant legislature. This proposed reform, in particular, drew significant blowback from the entrenched elites, who accused the liberals of trying to weaken the Jordanian state. They again convinced the king that reform was premature; the day after he received the committee's proposed National Agenda draft, the king dismissed the pro-reform prime minister, Adnan Badran.⁶

After the failure of the National Agenda committee at the hands of the old guard, reform became more about rhetoric than real proposals. A 700-member forum approved the We Are all Jordan Initiative, which largely attempted to supplant the priorities of the National Agenda process. The parliament passed anti-corruption and pro-transparency laws, including one which explicitly named the selection of job candidates based on *wasta* as a form of corruption, but they were vague and had no teeth. The 2007 parliamentary elections saw a disastrous result for the opposition, which openly alleged election rigging. The parliament and government that resulted faced consistent allegations of illegitimacy and corruption. As a result, the King named Samir Rifai prime minister late in 2009 and tasked him with reviving the comprehensive reform effort that had lain dormant since 2005. "By now," writes Muasher, "the public was extremely skeptical of the seemingly aimless process" and the prime ministers who seemed reluctant to embrace reform.⁷ Rifai

⁶Muasher 2011

⁷Muasher 2011: 18

was not a source of encouragement, as he came from a conservative background; his father, Zaid al-Rifai, had been prime minister and pushed hard against reform for decades. Minor, cosmetic changes were the only result of reform efforts under Rifai, and the 2010 parliamentary elections again returned a weak, pro-government legislature.⁸

5.3 Post-2011 Reform Vision

In the midst of the 2011-2012 Arab Spring protests, which spread to Jordan's cities, King Abdullah II launched a series of discussion papers, which he framed as a comprehensive plan for political reform in Jordan. This reform vision contains significantly more detail than did his previous discussions of reform, and has led to the passage of several laws that I will discuss below. As I will also note, however, Jordanian citizens and expert observers remain decidedly skeptical that the King's reform vision will amount to concrete changes to Jordan's political system. Below, I will discuss the King's reform vision as it relates to the presence of *wasta* in Jordan. I will divide the reform proposals into three categories: the role of parliament, strengthening political parties, and the role of citizens.

5.3.1 The Role of Parliament and MP's

The King implicitly attacked the current dominance of *wasta* and patronage in his criticisms of the current parliamentary system. The King wrote that citizens have the right to expect candidates for parliament that will address their demands for policies and not just serve as providers of services: "Candidates are not running for the right to sit in Parliament in Amman and earn personal benefits" but rather have a responsibility of "making key choices on some of the most important decisions facing our country, decisions that will impact the

⁸Muasher 2011

future of every Jordanian.”⁹ Candidates will try to win votes, the King said, but they must be aware they need to earn the citizen’s trust and maintain it throughout the course of their entire term. He referred to a citizen’s “national duty” to engage candidates, to understand where they stand on key issues as well as their vision for Jordan’s long-term future.

As it relates to the work of parliamentary deputies, the King called for a focus on programmatic platforms, rather than patronage. Candidates must propose “practical, objective, fact-based programs that provide implementable solutions to our problems,” not just speak in the abstract or complain about problems only.¹⁰ Citizens, for their part, should be following the news, writing to newspapers and their MP’s, and joining community groups that try to build better neighborhoods and advocate for better services. Both the work of deputies, then, and their relationship with constituents must change. As I noted in the last chapter, Jordanians certainly do not characterize their interactions with deputies as productive or oriented toward creating policies that make Jordan better. This reform vision argues for moving away from the current situation, in which Jordanians often see their MP’s as competent only in providing *wasta*, while at the same time having little competence or interest in policy discussions.

Thus, the role of parliamentary deputies, according to this reform vision, must change. Deputies focus on local issues (i.e., distributing patronage to their *wasta* networks) rather than committing to national service. The King notes strongly that, though, that MP’s must provide honest political service. “In this matter, there can be no compromise: MP’s must act in the public interest at all times” or else they fail the citizens that elected them. They must balance local interests and national interests, and also balance collaboration in a

⁹Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein (2012, December 29). “Our Journey to Forge Our Path Towards Democracy.” Retrieved January 11, 2015 from http://kingabdullah.jo/index.php/en_US/pages/view/id/247.html

¹⁰Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein (2012, December 29).

productive government with the need to be provide constructive opposition when necessary. They must work with the cabinet and the government leadership as a whole. It is the job of the cabinet, the King wrote, to act as role models of effectiveness and dedication for MP's; in his words, to "champion good governance, in words and deeds."¹¹

5.3.2 Strengthening Political Parties

The key, the King wrote, is to begin by developing strong national parties who can aggregate the will of the people and bring it to respectful but vigorous debate within a parliamentary forum. Political parties will also be necessary in order to decide the composition of the Cabinet. The King noted that the traditional practice in Jordan has been to appoint technocratic ministers on the criteria of their leadership qualifications. Most of these have not been sitting MP's themselves. With political parties, there will likely be haggling as to which party controls which ministries. The prime minister may not necessarily always be an MP, but he or she will be chosen with consultation of the majority bloc in parliament. Parties, therefore, will give Jordanians a more direct role in determining the upper leadership of their government.

The King notes that strong and inclusive political parties are key to democratic reform. Democracy is not about just individual beliefs, he wrote, but "aggregating what individuals say into a set of concrete proposals for joint action that will move our country forward." The alternative to strong political parties is "the continuation of coalitions, pieced together out of political expediency rather than solidly built on meaningful party platforms or ideas." These types of coalitions lead to "unstable, unrepresentative governments" but Jordan "deserves better" than this outcome. The King outlined the challenges of political parties:

¹¹ Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein (2013, March 2). "Each Playing Our Part in a New Democracy." Retrieved January 15, 2015 from http://kingabdullah.jo/index.php/en_US/pages/view/id/249.html

to focus on national, rather than local perspectives; to build shared principles and priorities; and to put together platforms and professional party organizations.¹² Currently, parties find themselves co-opted by the tribal system and without access to the patronage the tribes distribute via members of parliament. Replacing this situation with strong political parties means breaking the *wasta* system entirely, or at least transferring the role of *wasta* brokers from tribes to political parties.

5.3.3 The Role of Citizens: “Active Citizenship”

As I have noted, Jordanian citizens feel isolated from the process of forming policy in the Kingdom. In the King’s reform vision, however, citizens comprise the “ultimate foundation of our democratic system.” In the present, the King says, citizens are responsible for holding government accountable. Their role will evolve to become the backbone of political parties that manage political affairs as these parties develop in the near future. The King is clear that voting is not enough; citizens must strive for “active citizenship.” Active citizenship entails pressuring elected representatives to do their best, through grassroots organizing and social media, and creating “a public sphere in which dialogue can be the first resort and protests the last resort.” To do so, citizens must demonstrate “awareness and search for the truth,” developing informed opinions and not relying on rumors. They must not rely on government to act, but need to generate ideas and solutions to present to their representatives.¹³

The King outlines three pillars on which “active citizenship” in Jordan must rest: “the *right* to participate; the *duty* to participate; and the *responsibility* to participate peacefully and respectfully.” These pillars are in turn built on several foundations of citizenship.

¹²Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein. (2013, March 2).

¹³Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein. (2013, March 2).

First, “citizens have the right to engage in political life” and the freedom and space for them to do so must be provided and protected. Second, politics involves duty, and “each citizen must share a part of the burden of deciding on the future we want to build for our children.” Citizens must consider such engagement and participation to be a daily activity. He condemns those who remain aloof or disengaged, or who boycott the political process; although he acknowledges their right to do so, he writes that this behavior involves shirking one’s democratic duty. Third, all citizens deserve the “honor and respect” of having their opinions heard, even when others may disagree with them.¹⁴

The King stresses that he means to deal with politics in the broadest possible sense: the process of debate and compromise over issues facing society from the local level to the national and beyond. He urges Jordanians to become more involved in local issues that impact their daily lives, such as better education for their children, better transit for commuters, and better social services for neighborhoods. A culture of engagement, as well as robust debate and discussion, form the basis for the concept of “active citizenship,” as he has defined it. “Through the twists and turns of our political development, it is our shared commitment to, and confidence in, the underlying processes of democracy that will bring us success.”¹⁵

5.4 Interview Data

In my interviews, I sought to examine whether the King’s vision resonated with Jordanian citizens, and the extent to which they felt the kinds of reforms he had in mind were possible. Is there any hope of reducing or eliminating *wasta* in the country’s political institutions?

¹⁴Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein. (2013, June 2). “Toward Economic Empowerment and ‘Active Citizenship.’” Retrieved January 20, 2015 from http://kingabdullah.jo/index.php/en_US/pages/view/id/253.html

¹⁵Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein. (2013, June 2).

Will the powers-that-be allow for deep changes that may threaten their hold on power? Do Jordanian citizens agree with the King's priorities and the particular reforms he has suggested? I found that the Jordanians I spoke to are very much in favor of reform; they mostly agree with the King's outline for top-level reforms to bring about greater equity and accountability, but put more emphasis than he did on the need to reform the Kingdom's political culture and civil society in order to combat the insidious role of *wasta* in the political system.

Among the Jordanians I interviewed, however, there was deep pessimism about the possibility of political reform. Palestinian respondents tended to point fingers at the tribal system, claiming that the tribes value their hegemony and want no deviation from the status quo. (On the other hand, many also noted they felt the tribes would defend the national integrity of the Kingdom, and not just tribal interests, in the event of terrorism or an attack from ISIS if either were to occur.) East Bankers tended to take a more generous approach, blaming the older generation's traditional ways for current problems of *wasta* and political stagnation. On one subject both groups agreed: that changing Jordan will require decades, not years.

Most interviewees felt that Jordan's political system has not been improving in effectiveness or transparency. Some, however, pointed to prominent anti-corruption cases in the news as evidence that the government is addressing the issue to some extent. All interviewees felt the Arab Spring protests had produced little to no change; most felt the protests were fairly narrow in scope and had little organizing momentum behind them. Interview respondents were divided on the question of whether, over the long run, Jordan has the potential to accomplish democratic reforms, with one despairing that Jordan is a "hopeless case" where reform is impossible because *wasta* is "like a cancer" eating away at

the system.¹⁶

As I have noted elsewhere, the power of the tribes was a common theme among Palestinian responses to questions of *wasta* and reform. If the current system allows the tribes near-total impunity as well as dominance of government and the military, goes their thinking, why would they ever allow any change to that system? One Amman business owner stated point-blank that no society with tribal foundations could function without *wasta*. The logic of family connections and tribal prestige will necessarily prevent any breakdown of the *wasta* system, according to him. Indeed, I have noted that the power and influence of tribes has come to depend on the political system; tribes fight hard campaigns because MP's will gain access to state resources they can privately distribute to their constituents, and tribal constituents have come to rely on these resources, especially comfortable government jobs. Without question, any attacks on the *wasta* system would entail profound changes to how tribes themselves function in the Kingdom.

However, East Bankers tended to have a more balanced outlook on the possibility for reform. To them, there is a core of young East Bankers friendly toward democracy and accountability who have grown fed up with the political stagnation and machine politics that the tribal *wasta* system represents. It's very difficult to tell how widespread this view is, however. Even the most optimistic East Bank interviewees I talked to admit that friends and family members their own age routinely use *wasta*, especially in order to get jobs. Their families continue to select political candidates collectively, based on tribal identity and not on competence. However, one raised the point that he sees society as a whole changing in a more democratic direction in some ways. He noted that he was not aware of discussions on women's rights until maybe five years ago, at which point he was 17. However, his five year old niece has been surrounded by these sorts of ideas for her whole life. Therefore,

¹⁶ Palestinian female, interview with the author, April 21, 2015.

he expressed some hope that these sorts of reformist ideas will gain a foothold among the young.¹⁷

There is much agreement among Jordanians on the subject of how change ought to happen. Nearly all interviewees acknowledged that people must change their behavior on an individual level. Many complained that people complain about *wasta* but continue to use it if they have it. However, this change goes against the incentives that lead people to use *wasta* in the first place: many interview respondents admitted that it would be difficult to expect someone to forgo the use of *wasta*. If I choose not to use *wasta* because I feel that to get ahead by using *wasta* is wrong, but everyone else continues using *wasta*, I lose out and nothing changes. Forgoing *wasta* might mean not having work, or not getting into the best university. Such decisions could impair an individual's livelihood and stay with them for their entire life. Indeed, one of my respondents was adamant about not using *wasta* to get a job, because he fervently believed doing so would be wrong. However, when I saw him a few months later he told me he had decided he had no choice but to use two connections he had, and he almost immediately found a position (after over a year of failing to do so without *wasta*). "I have a family to feed," he said simply.¹⁸ Without broader coordination in forgoing the use of *wasta*, individuals may not be willing to make a deep sacrifice in the short-term without some expectation of long-term benefit to the country.

In Jordan, there are efforts to build that kind of mobilization. Leaders of Tomorrow, an Amman-based NGO that focuses on youth civic engagement and good governance, has launched a program called For9a (pronounced "forsa"). For9a, the Arabic word for "opportunity," provides training for individuals on how to get a job without resorting to *wasta*. For9a comprehensive training includes how to find open positions, how to write a

¹⁷East Bank male, interview with the author, April 15, 2015.

¹⁸East Bank male, interview with the author, April 28, 2015.

resume, and how to conduct oneself in a job interview. The program has conducted nearly a dozen training sessions in governorates all around the Kingdom, aimed both at individuals and at civil society organizations who can further spread these skills. For9a also maintains a website in both Arabic and English with a wide variety of job search resources.¹⁹

In addition to changes from the bottom-up, many respondents highlighted the need for Jordan's leadership to take initiative in bringing reforms. One East Bank interviewee explained that change both from the bottom and from the top is necessary: if someone looking to distribute *wasta* to those below him hears "no," and also hears "no" when he is seeking *wasta* benefits from those above him, he will know that *wasta* is no longer an option for him. If change only happened from the top, an MP (for example) would still feel pressure from those he represents to provide goods, and would exert pressure upward for that ability to be restored. On the other hand, if only the culture "from below" changes, he will still feel pressure from above to be involved in *wasta* and corruption. He used the analogy of emptying a water bottle: if you poke a hole in one place or another, only some water may leak out. You need to make sure to address the entire system; in this analogy, opening the top and dumping the water out until every last drop is gone.²⁰

Not all respondents agreed on the question of whether Jordan's political system needs reform. Two respondents felt that "Jordan is not ready for democracy" because for too many young people, "if your father tells you who to vote for, you do it."²¹ That family-based political culture especially impacts women in rural areas, they argued. Though all respondents characterized Jordan's democracy as weak or partial, they were not necessarily sure that a better alternative was available. In many ways, these feelings correlated with

¹⁹Lian Saifi, interview with the author, June 1, 2015.

²⁰East Bank male, interview with the author, April 15, 2015.

²¹East Bank female, interview with the author, April 23, 2015.

overall disengagement from politics that I noted above. A number of respondents acknowledged that young people were not trained to imagine a better future for themselves, but to go along with the country's leadership without questioning it.

Further, there was disagreement about how to go about reform on the institutional level. None of the Jordanians I interviewed endorsed dramatic, contentious methods of seeking change, like protest. As I note above, they all felt that the Arab Spring protests had failed to extract anything more than nice reform ideas and perhaps some show trials of corrupt politicians. In addition, most expressed an underlying fear about external threats, especially from terrorism at the hands of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). The perceived dangers lurking outside Jordan's borders nearly all respondents to call for national unity above all else. One Palestinian said that a citizen's duty is to "protect the unity of Jordan" and "not cause problems."²² Many Palestinian interviewees voluntarily mentioned support for the King and a desire for continued good relations with the East Bank tribes; one even showed off a keychain that combined the red-and-white *keffiyeh* (traditional men's headscarf) worn by East Bankers with the black-and-white *keffiyeh* more common among Palestinians.

Therefore, it was difficult to discern any underlying desire for abrupt, dramatic change. Some respondents did admit that if reform does not happen, it may lead to bottled-up tensions and frustrations being released through protests, but none of the Jordanians I spoke to believed that hypothetical future protests would have much impact. (One respondent suggested "burning down the parliament" in order to achieve change, but it was clearly intended as a joke.) Respondents seemed sympathetic to the kinds of causes advanced during the Arab Spring protests, but were sensitive to the fact that many protests were narrowly focused or poorly planned, and felt that the government tries to discredit those

²²Palestinian female, interview with the author, April 21, 2015.

who speak out as being anti-Jordan.

This would be a good juncture to reflect on my role as a researcher and my assumptions about my interview subjects. I do feel that my interview subjects were, on the whole, being honest with me about their views on *wasta* and the government. They were all comfortable openly criticizing parliament, the prime minister, and the cabinet. Those who complained about student laziness acknowledged that the subject could be a controversial one. The willingness of Palestinians to speak so fervently about their fear of the tribes was especially striking. My impression is that the interviewees trusted me, and volunteered to speak with me because I approached them through other people they trusted, such as Fulbright scholar friends of mine who were teaching at their universities or Jordanian friends and acquaintances.

However, true levels of support for the monarchy are difficult to discern as a foreigner. Openly criticizing the King and the royal family remains a line that most Jordanians would not cross with someone they do not know well, if at all. Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate, better known by its name in Arabic, the *mukhabarat*, is widely believed to undertake vast domestic surveillance in the interest of combatting terrorism and unrest. Further, in a phenomenon that is by no means unique to Jordan or the Arab region, Americans are often assumed to be working for the CIA. Knowing this research environment, I did not ask questions about the King, other than to mention his reform plans that I cite above. As I mention above, many Palestinians openly volunteered their support for King Abdullah. Two respondents volunteered that they would prefer a constitutional monarchy where the King has only a ceremonial role, but these were outliers among my interviews. Overall, it is my best estimation that most Jordanians have respect for the King and recognize him as a necessary unifying figure in an ethnically divided society; certainly, I would doubt that very many want him overthrown. Whether they have confidence in his ability or desire to

follow through on his reform plans is something I honestly cannot judge very well from my standpoint.

That said, all my interviewees expressed support for the King's reform vision when I mentioned his discussion papers. On the other hand, none were aware of them previously (a fact that is not lost on the Kingdom's decision-makers, as I will explain below). A university student responded that, "If the King said this is the plan, I trust it will happen" because he can make the leadership follow him.²³ Another respondent said, "Jordan would be a better country if the government applied what the King said," referring to the reform vision.²⁴ Another stated that if people saw *wasta* reform happening on the parliamentary and cabinet level, they would see the King's hand at work and realize that the reforms were serious and would stop expecting to get *wasta* from these sources. Many interviewees acknowledged that the King's power is limited to some degree. A common refrain among Jordanians, when they criticize the government, is that the King is great but has bad advisers. Further, several respondents admitted that the King's hands are sometimes tied by needing to placate the tribes.

5.5 Reforms in Progress

Above, I carefully laid out King Abdullah's reform vision because of its centrality in the political reform efforts in Jordan that have been taking place since 2011. As I demonstrated through interview data, however, Jordanian citizens are largely skeptical of the possibility of real reform in the Kingdom. Many expressed that they hear a lot of talk, but don't see a lot of actual change in their daily lives. Below, I will discuss concrete measures that have been taken to promote reform, from the debate and approval of several key

²³Palestinian male, interview with the author, April 25, 2015.

²⁴East Bank male, interview with the author, April 25, 2015.

laws to the continued work of the National Integrity System. In addition to studying the laws, parliamentary debate, and the National Integrity System’s framework, I interviewed one of the King Abdullah’s senior advisers on domestic political affairs in order to get a better sense of how the King and the Royal Hashemite Court feel about the progress and trajectory of the reform efforts.

5.5.1 Interview at the Royal Court

In June 2015, I interviewed Mehdi Zoubi, Manager of Domestic Political Affairs in the Office of His Majesty, at the Royal Hashemite Court. The interview provided useful information on reforms currently in progress, and the feelings of the royal court as to their impact so far on the country’s political culture. Zoubi discussed three primary areas: anti-corruption measures, decentralization, and efforts to bolster political parties.

Zoubi acknowledged that corruption was a driving force behind the Arab Spring protests, including those that happened in Jordan. Because of this, the political reform process has taken the idea of integrity seriously; in 2012 the King established the National Integrity System and named a royal committee to study integrity and ways to ensure clean and transparent governance. I will discuss the National Integrity System in greater detail below. The committee has found that the greatest single impediment to reform is lack of coordination among oversight agencies: the parliament, the Audit Bureau, the anti-corruption agency, the Judicial Council, and the various military and security agencies have their own standards and practices, and they act independently rather than communicating with each other. Zoubi said this lack of coordination holds back a “white revolution” in Jordan, leading to a government and civil service that upholds transparency, effectiveness, and equal access to opportunities.²⁵

²⁵ Mehdi Zoubi, interview with the author, June 1, 2015.

Zoubi noted one public sector reform that has already taken place: the selection of leadership positions within the civil service. Previously, office directors would hire their own subordinates, leading to the use of *wasta* and connections to curry favor with these directors. Now, however, there is a three-tiered system of committees, each of which checks the merit of candidates for promotion, and culminating in a cabinet-level committee designed to ensure fairness. The system ensures a transition toward merit and competence as the only criteria for jobs, as opposed to *wasta*. Job candidates know that any efforts to use *wasta* will be futile, since so many different layers of oversight are in place to put a check on *wasta*.

According to Zoubi, decentralization of power from the national government to Jordan's governorates is a key element of the reform program. Decentralization represents a profound and fundamental change to the way that Jordan's government operates. Rather than centralizing decisions in ministries and bureaucracies, local elected councils will have the final say over distribution of services. By doing so, decentralization will break the power of *wasta* within parliament. It will prevent MP's from being able to dangle their connections to bureaucrats in front of their constituents, with the promise of favors if they win; under the decentralization program, these bureaucrats will no longer have favors to give out. The Municipalities Law, which dictates the guidelines of decentralization, is currently being debated in parliament.

Third, two laws at the draft stage are poised to have a large impact on the development of political parties. The political parties law will change the law government financial support is allocated to parties. Currently, each party is eligible for 50,000 Jordanian dinars (about \$70,500 US). The draft law would make parties eligible for much more funding, depending on the number of seats they win, their proportion of their MP's that are women

and youth, and their representation of Jordan's governorates. The law thus provides financial incentive for parties to reach out to build large national bases, and to include women and youth. The electoral law would increase the number of seats reserved to political parties under the second, list vote cast by Jordanian voters under the Kingdom's mixed majoritarian/proportional representation electoral system. In tandem, these two laws would increase the number of party members in parliament (as I have noted, most Jordanian MP's are independents) while reducing the number of parties. This would bring about the King's vision of having several large, national parties that have enough seats to form cabinets and also possess a large enough national base to attract competent leaders and develop policy platforms.

Zoubi acknowledged that citizens have not been feeling much of the reform process to this point. "It's not easy to change perception, and perception is reality." The attitudes citizens have about government ineffectiveness, *wasta*, and corruption have been formed over decades, and it will take time to change them. He noted that the implementation of an Independent Electoral Commission, and the finding of over 7000 observers that the 2013 election was clean and fair, gave people confidence in the value of their votes. However, he also said that he has personally been pushing to get decentralization done earlier rather than later. If the Municipalities Law is passed soon, its reforms will take effect well before the 2017 elections; it is his hope that these elections will be marked by a decline in promises of *wasta* and an increase in focus on policy programs, which will signal to citizens that a major change is underway. "If voters know that their MP's are part of a new democratic process, they will feel confidence in the changes going on." But he acknowledged that a great deal of work is ahead.²⁶

Zoubi was adamant that the reform project was on target and could not be stopped,

²⁶Mehdi Zoubi, interview with the author, June 1, 2015.

in an echo of the King’s discussion papers. Though he admitted that many MP’s are not happy about reform, especially the decentralization law, he said firmly that “we know clearly where we’re going” and everybody understands that there is political will behind the process. Even the instability and war in neighboring countries cannot delay or stop Jordan’s reform progress, he said. Everyone has a role, and there is no going back.²⁷

5.5.2 The National Integrity System

King Abdullah launched the National Integrity System in a formal letter to Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour in December 2012. In his letter, he established a committee to draft a charter that would lay out the principles of integrity and establish monitoring mechanisms in line with international best practices. He appointed some of the country’s highest leaders and most well-regarded citizens, including one woman, to the commission. The committee subsequently released a National Integrity Charter, along with an executive plan for the Charter’s implementation, in 2013.

The Charter explicitly names *wasta* as a form of corruption (in addition to bribery, misuse of power, nepotism, and other methods) that must be addressed. It defines integrity as “the recognition and respect of others’ material and non-material rights and not to trespass over them by succumbing to the temptations of making illegal or undeserved benefits” but rather the promotion of “a genuine spirit of citizenship.”²⁸ The first principle the Charter lays out is the imperative to acknowledge, rather than deny, the existence of corruption in Jordan’s government and society. It also notes the need to identify legal loopholes that allow the moral deficiencies of individuals to take advantage of others. Of great importance is “continuous revision” of anti-corruption measures, as corruption has

²⁷ Mehdi Zoubi, interview with the author, June 1, 2015.

²⁸ Royal Committee for Enhancing the National Integrity System in Jordan. (2012). *2012 National Integrity Charter and Action Plan*, 8.

the tendency to maliciously adapt to work around the systems designed to keep it in check.²⁹ Lastly, the Charter proclaims there should be “no leniency toward institutional or individual deficiencies,” in order to promote real accountability.³⁰

The Charter’s Executive Plan lays out twenty “aspects,” or areas of reform that are needed, and an action plan for each aspect. Along with each group of action plans, or “projects,” is a timeframe for implementation of the various action plan reform steps, and the agencies or bodies which will be responsible for ensuring implementation. Key elements of the reform aspects are enhancing the role of monitoring agencies within the bureaucracy, encouraging local development and empowering local decision-makers, “enrooting a culture of transparency in public work,” reforming Jordan’s educational system, and parliamentary reforms designed to strengthen the legislature and political parties.³¹

In drawing up the Charter and its Executive Plan, the Royal Committee conducted meetings in each of Jordan’s twelve governorates with “elite intellectual and opinion leaders” in each area to seek their input.³² Additional meetings were held to solicit the input of government, university, political party, and civil society leaders. The committee did not hold forums open to the general public, but it did create email and fax addresses that citizens could use to send in their input. The Committee also posted a draft of the Charter on its website for public viewing and input.

²⁹ *National Integrity Charter*, 8.

³⁰ *National Integrity Charter*, 9.

³¹ *National Integrity Charter*, 9.

³² *National Integrity Charter*, 63.

5.5.3 Current Progress on Reform Laws

Jordan's parliament went into recess after its ordinary session ended in May 2015. Shortly thereafter, however, King Abdullah called the parliament to meet in extraordinary session over the summer to debate the proposed Political Parties Law and Municipalities Law, both of which I discuss above in the interview with Mehdi Zoubi. During this extraordinary session, MP's passed the political parties law largely as it had been proposed, with amendments stipulating that a political party must have bi-laws defining itself, and setting up a political parties committee made up of upper-level officials from cabinet ministries.³³ The Senate subsequently approved the political parties law. The decentralization and municipalities law, however, proved more contentious, and debate of that law was postponed prior to the Royal Decree concluding the extraordinary session in late June.³⁴

In a development that surprised observers of the Kingdom, the Royal Court proposed in late August 2015 a draft law aimed at reforming the electoral system. The proposed law does away with the one person, one vote system that has been criticized for damaging the prospects of political parties. The accusation, as noted in Lust, Hourani, and Momani (2011) and by many others, is that forcing voters to choose only one candidate in a multimember district election leads them to select the member of their tribe or family running, due to *wasta* considerations, whereas they might use their second vote to select someone with whom they agree ideologically. The evidence supports this claim; the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Islamic Action Front party polled very well in the 1989 elections before the introduction of one person, one vote. In the 1993 and subsequent elections, they

³³Omari, R. (2015, June 14). "Lower House Endorses Political Parties Bill." *The Jordan Times*. Retrieved September 6, 2015 from <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/lower-house-endorses-political-parties-bill>

³⁴Omari, R. (2015, August 31). "New Elections Bill Sheds One-Vote System." *The Jordan Times*. Retrieved August 31, 2015 from <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/new-elections-bill-sheds-one-vote-system>

performed much less well and other parties were only able to muster a seat or two. As I note in Chapter 2, the vast majority of MP's are independent of any political party as a result of recent elections.³⁵

The proposed law returns the 1989 electoral law practice of allowing voters to cast as many ballots as there are open seats in their district. It adds an element from the 2013 electoral law, however, in that it continues the existence of a reserved set of seats that voters will select from a national list. Another important change is the reduction of the number of overall MP's from 150 to 130. At the same time, there will be some increase in the representation of Jordan's cities. Quotas for minorities (Christians, Circassians, and Chechens) and women will be kept as they were in the 2013 electoral law.³⁶

5.6 Reactions to Reform

Reactions to the Kingdom's reform efforts have been mixed. As I note above, the Jordanian public is deeply skeptical of reform efforts, considering them as little different than previous attempts at political reform; they saw these efforts as token gestures to form committees who do not actually make changes, with perhaps a few show trials to create to appearance of fighting corruption. Zoubi notes that the Royal Court understands this skepticism, but hopes that citizens will change their mind in a few years when they see positive results in the form of decreased *wasta*, stronger political parties, and more authority for elected local councils.

There was also deep skepticism from experts with whom I spoke. One Western diplomat expressed pessimism that real change would result from the reform attempts. Speaking in

³⁵Ryan, C.R. (2015, September 2.) "Deja Vu for Jordanian Election Reforms." *The Washington Post*. Retrieved September 2, 2015 from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/02/deja-vu-for-jordanian-election-reforms/>

³⁶Ryan 2015.

particular about decentralization, he noted that having an elected local council could be a positive step; however, there are so many reviews and vetoes that happen before the elected council actually gets the chance to weigh in on proposed legislation that the process seems very constrained. He characterized the proposed law as centralization with the veneer of decentralization: it will appear that elected local councils are making decisions, when it will really be the central government calling the shots and giving local legislators little choice but to agree. The diplomat added that he saw the King's reform vision as mostly directed at Western audiences rather than Jordanians. The goal, therefore, would be to appear to move toward democratization while changing little, because little change is possible within the confines of Jordan's domestic political realities.³⁷

Leaders of Jordanian NGO's also had little faith in reform efforts. Several stated quite plainly that the proposed electoral law is merely a show. One felt that it would just give tribes more power. Currently, a tribe might have to share a district with another tribe or a Palestinian because they can only muster enough votes to elect one candidate. Now, because tribal voters can select two candidates, large tribes may be able to take multiple seats in the same electoral district, at the expense of other tribes, Palestinians, or ideological candidates.³⁸ Another complained that changes to the number of seats allocated to Palestinian-heavy cities were nowhere near enough; Palestinians will remain mostly aloof from the electoral process, staying home on election day because they have little confidence in elections generating a proportionally fair number of Palestinians in parliament.³⁹ Yet another argued that the Kingdom had mostly neutered the Muslim Brotherhood, meaning that any increase in Brotherhood representation in parliament would yield a loyal, coopted

³⁷Western diplomat, interview with the author, September 4, 2015.

³⁸Palestinian male activist 1, interview with the author, September 14, 2015.

³⁹Palestinian male activist, interview with the author, August 18, 2015.

opposition.⁴⁰

5.7 Analysis of Political Reform Efforts

The truth of how much Jordan can change as a result of these reform efforts remains to be seen, of course. The King's reform vision, on which he has chosen to stake his own credibility explicitly, represents the most dramatic reform effort the Kingdom has undertaken since the re-introduction of elections a generation ago. The impetus for reform was the drastic popular movement and restiveness among Jordanians in the 2011 and 2012 period; importantly, though, the reform effort did not stall once the protests petered out. This could suggest a seriousness on the part of Jordan's leadership to at least attempt changes to the structure of Jordan's political system. In addition, the development of the National Integrity System, discussed above, occurred publicly and with unprecedented levels of input from throughout society (even if non-elites were not granted open forum to comment other than by email).

The King's role in these reform efforts is, necessarily, unclear. Overtly, of course, he has been taking the lead, laying out a vision for strong political parties and a parliamentary model that sounds very much like a modern European system, rather than the current regime-oriented parliament and cabinet. If Goldberg's article is to be believed, the Western-educated King (whose mother is American, and whose English arguably surpassed his Arabic skills at his unexpected ascent to the throne in 1999) realizes the need for political reforms; he recognizes that dictatorship is becoming an obsolete model in the Arab world, and that more meaningful democracy is the only way to sustain Jordan's stability and indeed Jordan's Hashemite monarchy itself. According to this view, the King may or may not be a true believer in giving the people a great voice, but he views the current situation

⁴⁰Palestinian male activist 2, interview with the author, September 14, 2015.

as a ticking time bomb he would like his Kingdom to avoid.⁴¹

This view was widely expressed among my interview subjects. As I note above, I would not expect differently, because criticizing the monarchy represents such a red line in Jordan. But even close friends of mine, some of whom I would not consider establishment supporters by any means, expressed admiration for the King and the balancing act in which he finds himself, mediating among various groups and, as some see it, between tradition and modernity. It is nearly impossible to know what happens behind the closed doors of the royal palaces (Goldberg's article being perhaps the closest look, but without a doubt approved by the Royal Court at least partially as a Western-directed element of public relations) but the overall sense that the King is sincere and is doing his best.

It is the balancing act element that leads to skepticism. One respondent said, bluntly, on the matter of whether the King wants to see real reform, "It doesn't matter."⁴² As I note above, the majority of interview respondents (and the driving gist of the Goldberg article, for that matter) is that the Kingdom's tribes are entrenched, closed-minded, and backward. This view was somewhat more delicately put among young people from tribes as opposed to Palestinians, but the sense was still clear: we're waiting for our elders to pass from the scene because they're holding us back. Indeed, as I note in Chapter 2, this view is not surprising: the existing literature on *wasta* largely looks pessimistically on reform efforts because of the benefits the tribes enjoy in the current system, and their continuing power to react against reform.

However, this focus on only the tribes ignores the context in which they find themselves. To put it succinctly: the tribes will not be winners if, in the course of maintaining their *wasta* advantages, the country descends into crisis that shakes the very foundations of the

⁴¹Goldberg 2013.

⁴²Palestinian male activist 2, interview with the author, September 14, 2015.

state. The tribes do not benefit even in the case of small crises; as I note above, even now many are restive because of unequal economic development. Indeed, one Western diplomat noted that, while the near future prognostications for Jordan predict it will maintain the status quo, looking further than five years things become murky. If Jordan's economic challenges were to lead, for example, to the price of bread (which is generously subsidized) becoming too high for people to afford, protests more serious than those of 2011-2012 could result. Western countries fear desperation in this situation being so high, because people fear for their very survival and have no political outlet other than protest (and perhaps violence) that the country could be plunged into fighting.

To be clear, such a possibility is an extreme and is not the expectation at this point. However, with Jordan's economy continuing to rely on foreign aid, the tide of refugees from Syria showing no sign of stopping, and unemployment among a still growing youth demographic becoming no better, there is looming danger of crisis. If the political system itself were shaken, the tribes would certainly stand to lose a great deal. It is arguably this kind of possibility that the King is trying to avoid by encouraging democratic reform. The overwhelming sense of my interview subjects was that a united Jordan is a stronger Jordan; by bringing everyone into the political process in an equitable fashion, Jordanians could not only have institutional outlets for expressing dissent, but could see themselves as actors in working to meet Jordan's challenges.

At this moment, Jordan finds itself at an important crossroads on the matter of political reform. King Abdullah has released explicit, and drastic, plans to bring about a party-based parliamentary system in Jordan, accompanied by a political culture of participation and accountability. The National Integrity System has drawn in leaders throughout the Kingdom to draft a path forward, with a timetable for implementing benchmarks (even if some of the benchmarks are somewhat vague). The Royal Court and the Cabinet have led

a legislative effort to create new laws that lead to stronger political parties, more trust in elections, and empowerment of Jordan's local government structures. Popular pressure for reform has abated somewhat (in that protests have subsided) but Jordan's citizens remain dissatisfied with their ability to influence the political system.

The role of *wasta* has an important role in all these discussions. The reform movement is more than an explicitly anti-*wasta* movement. However, personal connections that subvert the law, render the electoral process suspect, and mitigate against national political parties with policy platforms are the enemy of Jordan's reform movement. *Wasta* is not completely synonymous with corruption, nor is it always necessarily illegal, but a culture of privilege due to one's personal connections rather than merit, the disproportionate influence of tribes on the political system, and corruption in the awarding of public sector jobs all stem from the culture of *wasta*. As long as the desire for *wasta* from tribal parliamentarians dominates the electoral system, for instance, it is hard to see how there can be meaningful electoral reform.

Wasta's impact is amplified by the Kingdom's weak economy. Maintaining a large patronage system comes at a high cost in a country that is heavily dependent on foreign rents rather than domestic resources in order to stay afloat. "Much of the government's efforts are focused on securing a donor fix instead of trying to develop and sustain a competitive local economic environment."⁴³ The latest statistics report that women make up only 13% of Jordan's labor force, while youth unemployment has risen to nearly 29%.⁴⁴ According to *Forbes* magazine: "Jordan's economy is among the smallest in the Middle East, with insufficient supplies of water, oil, and other natural resources underlying the

⁴³Al-Qasem, L. (2016, March 3). "Too Much of a Good Thing." *Venture Magazine*. Accessed July 14, 2016 from <http://www.venturemagazine.me/2016/03/too-much-of-a-good-thing-foreign-aid/>

⁴⁴Magid, A. (2016, March 14). "Political, Economic Alarm Bells Ringing in Jordan." *Al-Monitor*. Accessed July 14, 2016 from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/jordan-economy-crisis-government-officials.htmlxzz4E1ZDac54>.

government's heavy reliance on foreign assistance.”⁴⁵

A big part of this economic strain is the role of patronage in the civil service. Currently, the public sector employs fully 42% of Jordan's workforce and takes up 37% of GDP.⁴⁶ By comparison, the international average rate of public sector employment is 15%.⁴⁷ Jordanian sources accuse the regime of bringing this massive bloat on themselves. According to former head of intelligence and chief of the Royal Court Adnan Abu-Odeh, “The mindset that the regime established in this country over the last fifty years [is one that says that] it is me who feeds you, by getting you a job in the government [rather than] working as a plumber outside.”⁴⁸ While Jordan will face increasing pressure to reduce its public sector spending (which currently takes up 90% of GDP), many domestic actors will likely have to suffer as a result in reductions in this “nanny state,” to borrow a term from Margaret Thatcher.

It is hard to imagine the difficult structural changes (such as a reduction in public sector employment) Jordan needs occurring without some measure of popular input. “We need to take harsh decisions,” says former Royal Court chief Jawad Anani, and “without democracy, it is difficult” because “the government needs to have legitimacy.”⁴⁹ For this reason, the proposed reforms Jordan is undertaking make sense as a first step. It remains to be seen, however, whether Jordan's reform will stall before they even get off the ground. As I have noted above, there is great reason for skepticism that the regime has the will to reform because of the pressure it faces from stakeholders among the tribes and the intelligence services. Or, if it has the will to reform, these traditional holders of power may

⁴⁵ “Best Countries for Business, 2015.” *Forbes*. Accessed July 14, 2016 from <http://www.forbes.com/places/jordan/>.

⁴⁶ Al-Qasem 2016

⁴⁷ Magid 2016

⁴⁸ Magid 2016

⁴⁹ Magid 2016

attempt to neuter any meaningful reforms with laws that seek to undercut reform goals.

As many of my respondents note, defeating, or even reducing, the culture of *wasta* will require more than changes of law. The reforms outlined in the King's vision and the National Integrity System's goals represent important key top-down changes that would demonstrate the government's commitment to a political system that truly supports popular participation and accountability. However, if young Jordanians continue to be raised with the expectation that personal connections matter more than merit, there will likely still be pressure on civil servants and parliamentarians to continue *wasta* practices. If young Palestinians are raised to believe that East Bankers are more privileged and have the real power in government, they are unlikely to feel that they are equal partners in determining Jordan's future.

As a number of my interview respondents pointed out, reform of the education system is, therefore, critical. The National Integrity Charter calls for educational reform, but these proposals are mostly geared toward improving overall quality of teaching and test results, as well as increasing scientific research among Jordan's universities. These goals are admirable, and necessary, but Jordan's schools need to foster an educational culture of critical thinking. Educators must encourage students to become part of the national democratic project by through increased engagement with politics and current events; students should know what their government is doing and be encouraged to have an opinion on Jordan's national trajectory. Such reforms in the education system, difficult and long-term though they may be, would ideally lead to families, communities, and neighborhoods with a participatory, empowered political culture, and with faith in their political institutions.

Such faith in political institutions is a reminder that "bottom-up" reforms to political culture in schools, families, and communities must complement real legal reforms that come from the top down. If students are to be taught that their political institutions are effective

and welcome their participation and engagement, this teaching will ring hollow if such is not actually the case. Wasta's role in pitting Jordanians against each other (as individuals and ethnic groups) and separating people from having a stake in their country's future will have to change. Jordanians, both East Bank and Palestinian, will need to feel like equal partners in governance, with a system that gives both proportional say in the country's affairs. The government will have to provide social services equitably (based on law, not connections) and in a transparent way that allows for accountability.

Such an outcome – an effective civil service free from corruption, strong parties that can form blocs in parliament, and a political culture that encourages engagement and participation – are certainly a dream at the moment for Jordan. (Even established democracies struggle with these elements.) For the moment, the pervasiveness of *wasta* has not abated, and it remains to be seen whether the the Kingdom's political leadership has the political will, or the ability within their constraints, to really attack the root of so many of Jordan's political problems: *wasta*.

5.8 Political Reforms: Likelihood and Potential Impact

Given Jordan's checkered history of political reform, what ought we expect to see in the near and long term future? Will the traditional power brokers in the Kingdom keep reforms in check, or will "this time be different?" Will Jordan's difficult circumstances finally convince the tribes, the army, the intelligence services, and the rest of the regime's support base that drastic changes to their privileged position is unavoidable? If at some point dissent and unrest makes the status quo untenable, will these forces of the status quo correctly read the situation and realize that a new reality in which they play a reduced role may be preferable to dramatic instability? Predicting the future is always fraught with danger, but it is possible to make observations based on both past behavior the actors involved as

well as the trajectory of Jordan's political, social, and economic situation.

5.8.1 The Regime and Its Traditional Support Bases

Attempting to discern the forces at play behind closed doors in the palaces and office buildings where the highest-level decisions are made in Jordan is likely a futile effort. We can consider, however, the King's history with reform, his own statements, and the potential impact of reform on the regime. As I noted above, King Abdullah made a political opening a priority from the very earliest days of his reign. From the beginning, however, he encountered opposition from traditional forces. In this most recent round of reform efforts, however, he has outlined a detailed vision and has staked his credibility upon its success.

Skeptics in the Kingdom argue that the King and the royal court are not addressing Jordanians when they talk about reform, however. Rather, they are addressing the international donor community. Without a doubt, the King made sure his discussion papers were available in both Arabic and English on his website, and that they were disseminated in both Arabic and English media. In a meeting at Leaders of Tomorrow that I attended, a French senator we hosted made it quite clear she was pleased with the promises the regime was making; she pushed back against any skepticism the NGO presented on the basis of their past experience. One friend of mine even posited that Western countries are the ones really calling the shots in Jordan, not the King! By that logic, efforts at reform are no more than "forming a committee to form a committee" and keeping donors happy (or at least relatively guilt-free).

At the same time, the King's discussion papers came as a direct response to the Arab Spring protests in Jordan. There was, by necessity, a Jordanian audience. Furthermore, they did not come at a time when there was any threat of reduced Western aid due to perceived lack of democracy or stalled political reforms. In fact, Jordan has made itself a

key ally of the United States with respect to Israel since the 1990s, and has more recently become a crucial bastion of stability in the mist of a region that finds itself in turmoil. It would be difficult to imagine Western countries punishing a country they so desperately need, and that they so desperately need to remain stable at the very least.

Thus, it behooves us to take the King's reform proposals seriously. That they addressed Jordanians at a time of perhaps unprecedented popular dissent does not mean that reforms will be successful, but it does mean that Jordanians are likely paying attention. While most Jordanians I interviewed did not have a deep knowledge of the King's reform vision, Jordanians are following the trajectory of reform on all forms of media. Reporting on these reform laws has been consistent over the past year, and it has generated discussion.

What would the political reform proposed actually mean for the regime? For King Abdullah, it would mean becoming a constitutional monarch. He himself proposed constitutional monarchy in his discussion papers. The King would give up his prerogative of appointing a prime minister and cabinet. While this change might help him by isolating his own reputation from that of the always-disliked prime minister, it would represent a major shift from the status quo. At the moment, there is tight vertical control of the legislative process from the royal court down to the prime minister to the cabinet. The cabinet proposes bills that the royal court at least implicitly assents to (if the royal court was not the originator of the bill). As I have noted, once a bill is introduced, it nearly always passes, although opposition MP's may have some success at amending it. If the King allows parliament to select the cabinet, he risks giving up this system of tight control over the legislative and executive branches.

Most relevant to this dissertation, the regime's role as paternalistic patronage provider could not continue if the King's reform vision was realized. Strong political parties would either insist upon taking on the role of patronage providers or would attempt to break this

system entirely in order to impose meritocracy. The former result would resemble Latin American or Indian clientelism, while the latter could herald something resembling Western liberal democracy. The army and intelligence services would remain quite powerful, without a doubt. Jordan's military is visible and well-respected; indeed, the King and his son the Crown Prince often preside over state events in military attire. The influence that these organizations wield would be reduced, however, because of patronage drying up and because they would find themselves accountable to Jordan's citizens (via a strong parliament) for the first time.

Thus, reform does not present a mortal threat to the regime itself. The King, the military, and the intelligence services would have to adjust to a new reality of reduced control over the country and increased accountability to citizens, but all would survive mostly intact. It is my estimation that in the event of a truly serious threat to Jordan's stability, regime forces would acquiesce to such reforms. In the short term, however, that time has likely not come. Because of the region's turmoil, dissent within the Kingdom is low and support from Western and Gulf powers is very high. There is little incentive to take dramatic risks at the moment. The regime may view this current round of reforms as an experiment, though, to assure itself that giving up some power in the future will not in fact lead to a collapse of the regime's power structures. Any changes the regime allows, however, will likely be incremental and conservative.

5.8.2 The Tribes

Political reform would have a dramatic impact on Jordan's tribes. At the moment, the tribes wield little official power but a great deal of de facto power. They are the conduit for patronage, they dominate the parliament, and they hold a tight grip on the civil service, military, and intelligence services. Democratic political reform envisions no real role for

the tribes, however. Political parties would take over their role as the driving force in parliament. Greater transparency would decrease their ability to exert power behind the scenes. Meritocratic selection of bureaucrats would break the *wasta* system in the civil service and the army that provides the tribes their main source of influence. Greater democratic openness would also likely lead to a reduced civil service in the first place, and one open to Palestinian Jordanians as well as East Bankers.

Of all Jordan's actors, then, the tribes stand to lose the most from the proposed political reforms. Unlike for the regime, their transition would not be subtle: they would have nearly nothing left in a new, democratic political reality. The tribes have little to offer besides traditional bonds of kinship and political patronage. Youth from tribes have suffered from a poor state education system, and so would be on the whole unable to compete with Palestinians in securing private sector jobs. Tribal loyalty is not under threat from political reform by any means, but tribal affinity does not "pay the bills." It is *wasta* and patronage that gives the tribes their political clout. Without their privileged position, they would be relegated to a source of spiritual unity only, devoid of material clout.

Therefore, it is unlikely the tribes will give in easily to the political reforms that the King has proposed. While parliament has already begun passing political reform laws, it seems likely the tribes will attempt to neuter or compromise them if at all possible. While the regime could likely countenance a new reality of lessened control in favor of the overall system remaining in place, for the tribes, any reduction in the status quo means they stand to lose almost everything they current enjoy in terms of privilege and clout. Total collapse of the system remains a remote possibility, but anything short of a likelihood of total collapse will probably lead the tribes to resist any attempts at reform.

There is a caveat, however: Jordan's tribes are diverse and the tribal system is far from monolithic. It may be that smaller tribes could see that their lot may improve under a

democratic system, especially if they were getting proportionately little benefit from *wasta* to begin with. Tribes in Jordan's rural areas frequently complain about the concentration of resources and investment in Amman: they may feel that democratization would lead to a more equitable geographical distribution of state resources. Whether defection on the part of some less-powerful tribes would stop the more powerful tribes from blocking political reform is unclear at this point, and the question of inter-tribal relations as a whole merits a good deal of further study.

Further, it is clear from my interviews that tribal youth envision a more democratic, better-performing Jordanian government. Pressure from young East Bankers may push shaykhs and other tribal leaders to reform, but such pressure likely would take decades to build if ever. As a number of my respondents said, an entire generation or two may need to pass from the scene before they have the ability to enact meaningful changes in favor of democracy and meritocracy. It is possible, though, that these youth find when they reach leadership positions that acquiescing to reform is impossible for just the reasons I outlined above, however.

5.8.3 The Palestinians

Unlike the regime and the tribes, Palestinian Jordanians may stand to gain a great deal from political reform. Palestinians are systematically under-represented in parliament and are mostly shut out of the public sector. This exclusion impacts not only the ability to gain state jobs, but to gain access to the regime patronage that undergirds the power structure of the Jordanian state. The current reform program foresees a Jordan in which these patronage structures are upended and Jordanians are placed on an equal footing. National-level political parties could, in theory, form along tribal lines or according to confederations of tribes, but the overwhelming number of Palestinians could render such

attempts moot.

In addition to an equal stake in the Jordanian state, Palestinians would likely gain economic clout from political reform as well. A democratic Jordan in which rule of law dominates and contracts are respected regardless of *wasta* and influence would become a more attractive site for business and investment. As I discuss elsewhere in this dissertation, corruption (including *wasta*) is a detriment to business because of the uncertainty and additional costs it imposes on potential investors. Because Palestinians dominate the private sector, their well-being as a group would likely improve as a result of having a more democratic system; such a system would be led by government with greater popular legitimacy, one which could then respond to crises by marshaling national identity rather than relying on patronage largesse or even state violence.

5.8.4 Summing Up the Likelihood of Reform

What would it take, then, for political reform to become reality? Because the inner workings of Jordan's political system remain opaque, the strategic bargaining that goes on between the regime and the tribes is not clear. I have argued above that the incentives facing the regime and the tribes are not identical, however. The highest echelons of regime leadership (among them King Abdullah) likely realize that a stronger democratic system that marshals the popular will to build legitimacy would be better for Jordan politically and economically in the long term. As I noted above, such a government would be much more able to deal with crises in a way that does not provoke additional discontent. It is unclear whether the regime has the clout to be able to dictate such reform to the tribes if the need arose.

And the need may arise: Jordan's economy can hardly expect to maintain such a generous patronage system forever. The Kingdom has few resources and must rely on

foreign governments for much of its budgetary needs. Economic growth is stagnant, income inequality is a problem, and unemployment is pronounced, especially among the youth. At the moment, the Kingdom receives a great deal of foreign support due to its strategic importance. If Israel's position appeared stronger and ISIS were to lose significant ground in Syria and Iraq, would Jordan still seem as strategically important to Western and Gulf powers? Both the United States and Europe have experienced upswings in isolationism (from Trump to Brexit to large-scale trade agreements that appear moribund), and lower oil prices may limit the Gulf's ability to spare cash to prop up Jordan's government.

Whether pressure comes from a shock, such as a terrorist attack or unexpectedly large protests due to economic struggles, or over time, due to the unsustainable nature of Jordan's patronage system, reform will likely have to come. What remains to be seen is whether reform will be smooth or bumpy, and whether Jordan's traditional elites will attempt a reform from the top on their terms, or whether it will be forced on them from the bottom.

Chapter 6

Wasta and Politics: Broader Context and Implications

At the end of Chapter 5, I outlined the potential implications of this project's findings for Jordan's future: if Jordan does not address the problems associated with *wasta*, the government could find it difficult to maintain legitimacy and avoid social unrest if a crisis were to occur. The prevalence of *wasta* breeds deep dissatisfaction, especially among the young, with the resulting inequality, incompetence, and lack of accountability in government. Such dissatisfaction could compound social stresses due to a number of challenges, including a weak economy, the influx of refugees, the threat of ISIS, and rising unemployment among youth. Further, *wasta* divides Jordanian society; Palestinians continue to feel discrimination in the legislative and executive branches, which makes them acutely concerned that their government does not represent them and that they have no say in changing threat situation. As many of my respondents argued, divisions between the tribes and the Palestinians can only harm Jordan during the present time of challenges, when unity is most needed.

Whether *wasta* remains unchanged or becomes reduced due to institutional reform, then, has the potential to shape Jordan's future significantly. The findings of this project, however, are not limited to Jordan alone. The Middle East region has seen significant pressures from the rise of new media and the waves of protest starting in 2011 that are often known as the "Arab Spring." (Arabs sources tend to prefer "Arab Revolutions" or "Arab Uprisings," but I use these terms interchangeably.) Although *wasta* as a concept is

specific to Arab countries, I will argue in this chapter that the implications of this research can inform research and policy discussions on clientelism, corruption in a global context. Clientelism represents a long-standing but developing literature that exists primarily within academic research. Corruption has attracted attention from both the academic and policy communities over the past twenty years, and scholars continue to expand and refine both theoretical and empirical approaches to corruption.

6.1 The Middle East and the Arab Spring

The importance of *wasta* extends to the Middle East beyond Jordan, of course. Politics of patronage and influence are found in countries across the Arab region. This dissertation does not only speak to broader issues of *wasta* and patronage in the region, however; I will discuss in this section the ways my findings fit into the larger political environment of the Arab region in the wake of the Arab Spring revolts and the various results these revolutions have produced in the ensuing several years.

6.1.1 A New Arab Public?

Without a doubt, the primary rupture the Arab Spring represented in regional politics was a resurgence of popular will and discontent. I say “resurgence” because unrest among Arab citizenry is not a new phenomenon. As Lynch (2013) notes, the region faced an “Arab Cold War” in the 1950s and 1960s that saw similar waves of protest in a number of places.¹ In Jordan alone, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw uprisings in rural areas such as Ma’an, in the south, over the neoliberal belt-tightening and privatization reforms that the palace undertook as a condition of needed IMF loans. Before 2011, however, the

¹Lynch, M. (2013). *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*. New York: PublicAffairs.

primary driver of Arab politics had always been elite actors. From Nasser's Free Officers who overthrew Egypt's monarchy in 1953 to Abd al-Karim Qasim's coup in Iraq in 1958 (and his subsequent overthrow a few years later) to the rise of Ba'ath Party rule in Syria and Iraq in the 1960s, citizens were normally forced into a backseat as it related to shaping the political structure and destiny of their countries. Armies and political parties ruled the day.

Developments in the region during this millennium, including the Arab Spring, call this precedent in to question. With the rise of regional and international satellite television news, most prominently Al-Jazeera, as well as the advent of social media, citizens in the Arab world are more connected than ever. Furthermore, these independent communication channels frustrate the attempts of regimes to control the flow of information and ideas: now, more than ever, citizens themselves can access and contribute to discussions about regional politics and society. This has fostered a stronger, more independent Arab public that will be an ongoing player in regional politics. ?The new Arab politics will see a continuing struggle among key regional actors within a political arena defined by the new Arab public sphere.?²

If the role of the public sphere as a force in Arab politics is here to stay, this leads to questions about the old order of elite-driven, patronage politics. To what extent will Arab publics continue to be satisfied with *wasta* and their "service deputies?" Will regimes and their support bases be able to maintain the authoritarian balance they have carved out, promising private goods and welfare in exchange for mostly unimpeded control over decision-making? Will identities such as tribe, kinship, and sect continue as mechanisms for connecting citizens to each and to their regimes?

In Jordan, the evidence seems clear that deep discontent with patronage politics has not

²Lynch 2013: 198.

gone away. Dominant narratives among citizens center around complaints of incompetence, unfairness, and lack of accountability, as I discuss at length in earlier chapters. Trust and confidence in the government is low, citizens are frustrated by the awareness they have little say in Jordan's present and future, and they believe that, despite promises of reform, little is being done to change the old system in which *wasta* and influence, rather than merit and the rule of law, dictates where power lies in Jordan. These preliminary findings appear to cross boundaries of tribe, geography, and gender.

There is evidence that publics throughout the Arab world are likewise experiencing tension between their existing political systems and those they aspire to have. Tessler and Robbins (2014) used Arab Barometer data from the 2010-2011 period to study attitudes across the region with respect to political system. They compared the following regime types: "Democratic Secular," "Democratic with Islam," "Authoritarian Secular," and "Authoritarian with Islam." They found combined support for the two democratic systems to exceed 70% in all countries surveyed, including those of the Gulf which have had little experience with democracy. (In all but Oman, national parliaments in the Gulf number only a few dozen members, many of whom are not elected. In Saudi Arabia and Qatar, none are elected.) In all but Egypt and Saudi Arabia, in fact, support for democracy exceeded 80%. Further, they found that support for a "Democratic Secular" regime won plurality support among respondents in all but two countries, Iraq and Yemen, although in Iraq it was nearly tied with "Democracy with Islam."³

³Tessler, M. & Robbins, M. (2014). "Political System Preferences of Arab Publics." In M. Lynch (Ed.) *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*. New York: Columbia University Press. 285.

6.1.2 The Role of Arab Youth

In addition to this disconnect between political status quo and aspirations among publics in Jordan and throughout the Arab world, the role of youth suggests that these tensions may not go away. I noted in Chapter 2 that over 80% of Jordan's population is under the age of 35 according to official sources. Across the Middle East and North Africa, this trend applies as well: over half the region 60% of the region's people are under the age of thirty, and over half are under the age of twenty-five.⁴ Further, youth in the Arab world have grown up in the age of al-Jazeera, blogs, and social media. They have smart phones and communicate with each other with an ease previous generations did not have. Even rural youth are not excluded from these discussions, thanks to technology. (I can attest that even remote parts of Jordan's desert have excellent 3G coverage!) This was one of a number of reasons why I chose to focus on Jordanians 18 to 35 in my interviews: in addition to the "youth bulge" their numbers represent, they are living in a new reality of communication and political awareness.

But are youth substantively different from older cohorts across the region? Research has, at times, come to divergent conclusions. While journalistic reports of the Arab uprisings tended to portray youth as more liberal, less religious, and more supportive of secular politics than previous generations. At the same time, rates of internet usage remain low, even among youth. Studies have also found that youth often continue to identify with traditional institutions and kinship ties, and to sectarian politics. Whether the current young generation in the Arab world has substantively different views and behaviors from those of previous generations may indicate that the region's politics will experience sustained

⁴Hoffman, M. & Jamal, A. (2014). "Political Attitudes of Youth Cohorts." In M. Lynch (Ed.) *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*. New York: Columbia University Press.

pressure for change⁵

Hoffman and Jamal (2014) shed greater light on this issue. Using Arab Barometer data, they examine differences between youth and their older counterparts on a range of areas related to political views and participation, economic situation, and religious identification. They find that Arab youth are more likely to have a college degree, but also twice as likely to be unemployed as compared to older generations. They also find that younger generations are much more likely to participate in politics by protesting, and that they are substantially less likely to vote. (They note that this data was collected prior to the Arab Spring, so the incidence of protest among youth is capturing a phenomenon that already existed by the time the uprisings began.) Young Arabs are also much less likely to be interested in politics overall. Interestingly, their data also suggests that younger generations are slightly more likely to be supportive of their governments, and are more likely to believe that governments care about ordinary citizens and try to promote conditions for prosperity. Young Arabs also appear to be more satisfied with their economic conditions, despite the high incidence of unemployment among their demographic group⁶

Thus, the picture of Arab youth remains complex and difficult to generalize. This finding may highlight a central tension in modern Arab politics: the tension between national politics and the diffusion of pan-Arab political identity and discourse. On the one hand, citizens of Arab countries are all responding to different polities and political realities. For instance, the official ethno-confessional system in Lebanon, in which sectarian parties dominate politics, bears little resemblance to Jordan, in which neither sect nor political parties are a salient factor. The hereditary monarchies of the Gulf, which rely so heavily for legitimacy on varying degrees of stringent interpretations of Islam, are often

⁵Hoffman and Jamal 2014.

⁶Hoffman and Jamal 2014.

grouped together, but in fact vary significantly in terms of sectarian makeup and political arrangements. In Egypt, neither tribes nor sects play a significant role, nor does the regime rely on Islam for legitimacy.

6.1.3 The Pull Between Old and New

On the other hand, the diffusion of ideas in the Arab world in the past two decades is difficult to ignore. The best evidence of this is the Arab uprisings themselves: the toppling of Tunisia's president bin Ali seemed to set off a domino effect of protests in Egypt, which saw the departure of Hosni Mubarak, to Libya, Syria, Bahrain, and the rest of the region. Only Algeria and Oman were mostly unaffected by protests. The robust debate on the mobilizing effects of grievances versus opportunities exists mostly outside the scope of this dissertation. The results of such mobilization, and its diffusion, are clear, however: for the first time, Arab citizens, many of them youth, were able to bring concrete change to their leadership structures. No longer were they forced to stand by while military coups or elite parties led the way to political change.

At the same time, the role of the "old system" of elites has by no means given way. Egypt once again has a president from a military background who has attempted to clamp down on free speech and assembly. Regime supporters in Syria responded to protests with violence, leading to the outbreak of civil war and opening a vacuum which various militias, including jihadis, have attempted to fill. Status quo sectarian politics have largely crippled Iraq's ability to present a unified front against ISIS, which threatens the country's very structural integrity. Bahrain's protests were violently put down with significant help from Saudi military forces. As I noted in the last chapter, Jordan's promised reforms have yet to materialize. Only Tunisia has made progress towards a democratic system in which dominant parties may alternate in power, ostensibly seeking the country's good over their

own short term political ambitions.

While street protests have all but ended across the region, the question remains whether the tension between old and new politics will remain dormant. Well-entrenched tribes, parties, and sectarian actors, accompanied by patronage, influence, and rule by force continues to compete with support among publics for transparency and the ability to give voice to their aspirations. Were the Arab uprisings of 2011 and afterward merely the first battle of a new generation of interconnected, politically aware Arabs? Or will the old regimes full regain control, putting paid to the protesters and their goals?

Almost certainly, reality will fall somewhere between these two extremes. As the case of *wasta* in Jordan shows, the pull between these old and new politics has no clear trajectory. Young Jordanians are frustrated and worried about their futures, and decry the unfairness and incompetence of see *wasta* and patronage they see their government supporting. Yet, many are dependent on *wasta* and attempting to change the system on their own – that is, foregoing *wasta* – could be economically ruinous. Organized dissent from the *wasta* system could break the incentive structure that promotes it: it would signal that elites can no longer bank influence by distributing patronage. It could mitigate the harmful effects of foregoing *wasta*; one individual foregoing *wasta* stands to lose a great deal and gain little in terms of political change, but if organized groups fought against *wasta*, it could signal to other citizens that the benefits of structural change might outweigh the short term personal sacrifice. In addition, organized groups could potentially find means of common support. (Indeed, efforts such as For9a in Jordan, which I describe in Chapter 4, are making attempts to make life without *wasta* possible.)

As the Arab Spring uprisings demonstrate, such organizing will be difficult since the support structures of the old regime will fight against organized calls for change. As I noted in the previous chapter, many in Jordan believe the government has said and done all the

right things to convince protesters to go home, in order to buy time for unrest to quiet while at the same time using this opportunity this time provides to shore up the security state in order to mitigate against future organized resistance. At the same time, the “government” and the “regime” are not unitary actors, and it can be difficult (in Jordan and elsewhere) for observers to know where real power and decision-making lies.

6.1.4 *Wasta* and the Arab Context

Wasta’s influence on Jordanian political attitudes, then, resonates with the broader tensions in Arab politics and the development of the Arab public. Older, elite-based regimes are struggling to retain power in the face of drastic changes in communication, information, and connectivity among the people of the region, especially a burgeoning young generation. In the early days of the Arab Spring, a new order seemed possible, but elite politics have experienced a resurgence in most of the region (including in Jordan). In addition, civil wars in Syria and Libya, and the fragmentation of Iraq at the hands of ISIS, have encouraged the growth of security states at the expense of potentially destabilizing organized opposition. As my research and research across the region suggests, however, frustrations have not gone away, citizens continue to aspire to play a greater role in their countries’ political lives, and they continue to fault their governments for promoting poor outcomes and inequality. The ultimate trajectory of political change is not clear at this point, but the debate is unlikely to fade for long. At the center will be the region’s youth, who feel the pull of both old and new acutely, and who will have to navigate a path to either engagement or disengagement in the face of significant economic and security threats in the Middle East region.

6.2 Clientelism

In Chapter 2, I touch briefly on the academic literature on clientelism. This body of work helps to inform the study of *wasta* because *wasta* in the electoral system is a form of clientelism, as Lust (2009) and Lust, Hourani, and Al Momani (2011) have argued. Below, I will connect *wasta* to clientelism in greater depth, and I will discuss the ways that existing theories of clientelism help us to better understand *wasta*. I will also examine the ways that my research into *wasta*'s political implications can contribute to the study of clientelism around the world.

Political science first began to turn its attention to clientelism in the early 1970s.⁷ Political scientists sought a way to explain why power was not always arranged either vertically through formal institutions or horizontally through categories such as class.⁸ This led to a closer examination of patron-client linkages that anthropologists had first identified, primarily in rural agricultural contexts. Political scientists found that these linkages, and the groupings of power that they form, are present in societies around the world. This finding provided the basis for a research program aimed at constructing middle range theories that make it possible to compare clientelism in different countries and different contexts.⁹

This project dialogues with the existing research on clientelism in the following ways: first, it highlights the role of client demands, and uses this focus on client demands as a means to situate clientelism within the broader political system; second, it brings the role of tribes and kinship identity into questions of brokering and targeting patronage, and

⁷Kaufman, R.R. (1974). "The Patron-Client Concept and Macro-Politics: Prospects and Problems." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 16(3), 284-308.

⁸Scott, J.C. (1972). "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia." *The American Political Science Review*, 66(1), 91-113.

⁹Kaufman 1974.

creating social norms under which clientelism flourishes.

6.2.1 Citizen Demands, Clientelism, and the Political System

Contemporary literature on clientelism tends to study patron-client linkages from the perspective of parties or the entire political system, which leads to a heavy bias toward a top-down perspective. Examining important, but somewhat narrow, questions such as targeting of patronage or political party competition in electoral districts downplays the power difference between patron and client that the literature has always recognized.¹⁰ As Kaufman notes, when asking what exactly the concept of clientelism helps us to explain, that it helps us understand the political behavior of low-status actors.¹¹

Recently, Lindberg (2012) has made a similar critique. In his study of clientelism in Ghana's party system, he focuses on client demand. He finds that, while voters identify patronage benefits as a key expectation when casting their ballots, the actual track record of providing such private benefits has no significant effect in determining whether a respondent votes for the incumbent in a given contest. He argues that clientelistic benefits have become a kind of base expectation of any candidate for parliament; MP's are seen as "fathers" or "mothers" of their constituencies, tasked with "taking care" of their constituents as a parent would. Thus, patronage benefits play almost no role in distinguishing one candidate from another in Ghanaian elections; instead, voters are looking more at an incumbent's track record in proposing policies and other collective, rather than private, benefits.¹²

My project has similarly found that there is a great deal of information to be gained from taking seriously clients and client demands. As Lust (2009) and Lust, Hourani, and Al

¹⁰Scott 1972, Kaufman 1974

¹¹Kaufman 1974.

¹²Lindberg, S.I. (2012). "Have the Cake and Eat It: The Rational Voter in Africa." *Party Politics*, 19(6), 945-961.

Momani (2012) note, Jordan's electoral system behaves as we would expect a clientelistic system to behave: voters go to the polls to elect 'service deputies' who they expect to provide them with private benefits, connections, and a means of reducing bureaucratic red tape. To a great extent, campaigns are about pageantry and showing tribal solidarity, with voters reporting that they make up their minds shortly after candidacies are announced, and before they could realistically know much about what a candidate's platform would be.¹³

By examining client demands, however, we can see that voting practices do not paint a full picture of Jordanian clientelism. Many Jordanians I spoke to report voting for tribal candidates only reluctantly, or even asserted that they (or their families) sometimes defect from supporting the tribe's chosen candidate. Many Jordanians, predominately Palestinian Jordanians, do not vote in the first place. At any rate, my findings suggest that voting does not fully capture the health of Jordanian clientelism: regardless of the *wasta* that MP's provide, Jordanian youth overwhelmingly see their parliamentarians as ineffective and incompetent. This is true when looking at general assessments of parliament and when respondents talked about their own MP; for East Bankers, this meant openly criticizing someone from their own tribe.

As with the case of Ghana in Lindberg (2012), a Jordanian parliamentary incumbent's victory likely has little to do with the particulars of the *wasta* he has provided in the past. Indeed, there is historically high turnover from one Jordanian election to the next.¹⁴ Thus, though the system centers around patron-client exchanges, the exact dynamics of which constituents patrons target or what services they provide (a dominant theme in clientelism literature) are unlikely to tell us much about Jordan's elections. Rather, providing *wasta* is

¹³Lust, Hourani, and Al Momani 2012.

¹⁴Lust, Hourani, and Al Momani 2012.

merely what most Jordanian MP's do, and the actual competition over selection normally happens when tribes compete with each other over a seat. In some cases, a reformist candidate with a strong personality or background, or an ideological platform, wins a seat; I do not have enough information, though, to determine exactly when personalities or platforms are likely to resonate in a given district. Based on my interviews, this seems more common in Palestinian-dominant areas, not surprisingly. The women's quota has helped certain advocates of women's rights, such as MP Hind Al-Fayez, to earn seats. (Al-Fayez became the center of a prominent outburst in parliament's 2014-2015 session, in which a male MP tried to silence her by repeatedly yelling, "Sit down, Hind!" and loudly condemning the women's quota by which she had won her seat.)

Not only does the presence of clientelism likely tell us little about which candidates will win or lose, or the ways in which they actually distribute patronage benefits; clientelism by itself also provides little information as to the stability of Jordan's parliamentary system. In theory, clientelism should lead to a stable status quo: patrons and clients each know they are better off not defecting because the patrons would lose their office and the benefits that come with it, while clients might completely lose access to benefits on which they rely for survival and their success in the future.¹⁵ In Jordan, however, patron-client linkages may not do much to enhance the stability of the status quo. Because *wasta* (electoral clientelism) is simply part of an MP's job description, successfully providing clientelistic benefits is unlikely to impress constituents in itself. Further, high turnover rates tell us that if one candidate is, for whatever reason, falling short in his duty of providing *wasta*, there is no shortage of alternatives to him within his tribe. Unlike the traditional expectation of patron-client dyads, Jordan's clientelistic norms rely on the tribe more than on the individual patron herself. Because tribes are the glue that holds Jordanian clientelism

¹⁵Stokes 2011.

together, defecting from support of one candidate does not necessarily mean defecting from the clientelistic bargain as it plays out in Jordan.

Thus, the Jordanian case, along with Lindberg (2012), suggests we cannot rely exclusively on the logic of an iterated patron-client exchange in order to assess the health of a clientelistic system. Further, the presence of a clientelistic system itself tells us little about the overall health of Jordan's institutions. In fact, taking client demands seriously means we must take into account deep discontent with the entire enterprise of clientelism in Jordan, and the fact that this discontent negatively impacts respondent assessments of Jordan's political institutions. Within the context of the Jordanian state, my research into client demands suggests that clientelism plays a mostly negative role. It corrodes the state's ability to provide social services in a way that satisfies most people, it leads to a parliament that has few built-in incentives to meet the collective needs of all Jordanians, and it leads to a palpable lack of accountability since voters know their ballots mostly make no difference at all in setting a course for Jordan's future.

This finding suggests that we ought to be considering more carefully the impact of clientelism on a polity. After all, if dissatisfaction with clientelism were to contribute to a collapse of a regime, the incentives that keep patrons and clients bound together become unimportant. This is admittedly an extreme suggestion, but a wide variety of challenges to Jordan, or any other country with a weak democratic where clientelism dominates the relationship between people and their elected representatives, could spell trouble for a regime that clientelism cannot fix. The Arab Spring protests provide a telling example: Jordan saw five prime ministers in under two years as King Abdullah sought to find a cure for the social upheaval that had spread to his country. It is easy to imagine such a situation befalling many countries because of poor democratic systems that lack accountability mechanisms. In such a scenario, elections are unlikely to solve social tensions because they

are designed as clientelistic contests between parties or tribes, and in fact the inability of voters to use elections to express their needs could itself contribute to such tensions.

6.2.2 Tribes in the Clientelist System

The literature on clientelism has come to focus on the role of political parties as a means of creating and maintaining patron-client linkages. This focus is sensible in many contexts. Even in weak democratic systems, political parties and coalitions often dominate elections and government bureaucracies. It is certainly true of Latin America, India, and some African countries, which have been the focus of clientelism case studies.

This situation is very much not true of Jordan or a number of Arab states in which clientelism takes the form of *wasta*, however. Tribal practices remain persistent in Jordan and the Gulf. As I noted in earlier chapters, very few members of Jordan's parliament typically come from political parties; almost all are independents. Even in Arab states that have stronger party systems, parties are often not the most helpful way of assessing clientelism and patronage distribution. In Egypt, for instance, the National Democratic Party under Hosni Mubarak distributed almost all patronage, while other parties competed on strictly ideological grounds. In Lebanon, Cammett (2014) highlights the central role sectarianism plays in patronage distribution, as I noted in Chapter 2.¹⁶

What does this mean for those who study clientelism? First, it suggests that studies of clientelism should consider more than just the electoral system that often connects patrons and clients in modern contexts. Jordanian elections are clearly marked by clientelism, as candidates seek office based on the promises of private goods and special access to government. But while *wasta* binds parliamentarians to their constituents, it does so within the context of Jordan's tribal system. While in Latin America or India, for instance, a

¹⁶Cammett 2014.

particular party's candidate may be the one who distributes patronage in a given area, the reality in Jordan is that a candidate's name carries the most weight because it indicates his tribe. Because of Jordan's tribal culture, it signals that he will "take care of" his tribal constituents in the manner they expect; that is, through providing *wasta* to them. In many cases where clientelism has been studied, national political parties, like Hugo Chavez's United Socialist Party of Venezuela or the National Action Party in Mexico, are the entities that organize clientelism and patronage. In Jordan, tribal and family ties dictate who is owed clientelistic benefits. While voters can theoretically abandon their political party if that party does not provide enough benefits, or if those benefits are not enough to distract from poor policy performance, Jordanian voters cannot defect from a tribe to join another. Unlike political parties, tribes and their *wasta* pre-date Jordan as a state, and may be more enduring than the state itself.

Second, Jordan's clientelist system presents us with the uncomfortable question of how, precisely, to define what it means to be included or excluded from a clientelist system. What are we to make of Jordan's large Palestinian community, which has little access to *wasta* (and hence, little access to government itself), not to mention the smaller but prominent communities of Iraqis and Syrians who have arrived as immigrants in the last two decades? Clientelism in Jordan was not designed to handle the presence of groups other than the East Bank tribes. The norms of tribal honor, *jaha*, and mutual protection that I discuss in Chapter 2 became part of Jordan's formal and informal institutions. Jordan's kings have needed to rely on the tribes since the Kingdom's earliest days, and the tribes have fought to maintain this influence through gerrymandering of parliament and largely excluding Palestinian Jordanians from positions in the powerful civil service, army, and intelligence service that form the backbone of the ruling regime.

Therefore, it behooves researchers on clientelism to take seriously not just client demands, but a client's inclusion or exclusion from the clientelist system in the first place. In the context of party politics, are there particular voters in districts where Party A is a majority, and where its voters get the benefits of clientelism from their MP, where there are voters who for some reason do not support Party A? Do voters from certain backgrounds find themselves unable to participate, or do they choose not to? We know from the clientelism literature that poorer voters are targeted for benefits; this is only logical, as those with the least resources would be most in need of a patron. But what happens if voters move up in socioeconomic class and cease being part of this system? How do those not targeted for clientelism, for one reason or another, fit into the political and electoral systems?

6.2.3 Clientelism and Politics

These issues of client demands, the role of tribal culture and kinship identity, and the inclusion or exclusion of some individuals from the clientelist system, brings me back to my hypothesis from Chapter 2. My theoretical motivation for this dissertation project was primarily to widen the clientelism literature's field of view a bit to consider the implications of clientelism to the broader political context. Much of politics and governing occurs outside of patron-client dyads, or even clusters of patrons and clients or political parties. The case of Jordan makes clear that citizens make claims outside of the patron-client relationship and, in many cases, the existence of clientelism and *wasta* frustrates their ability to address these claims.

6.3 Corruption

Corruption has attracted steadily increasing attention from both scholars and policymakers in the past two decades. Treisman (2007) in an *Annual Review of Political Science* piece dedicated to corruption, notes a huge uptick in research on corruption in the 1990s and later, as opposed to the 1970s and 1980s. Researchers have sought to understand the causes of corruption, and why certain countries are home to more corruption than others. To this point, there exists a disagreement on both points: whether researchers have identified the causes of corruption in a reliable way, and whether existing methodology accurately measures the presence of corruption accurately across cases. My research primarily adds to the discussion as to the causes of corruption, but I can also tentatively speak to methodological questions as well.¹⁷

6.3.1 *Wasta* and Meritocracy

Dahlstrom, Lapuente, and Teorell (2012) argue that existing explanations of corruption are poorly supported by empirical data. They first outline the dominant political explanations for corruption. First, regime type: young democracies struggle whereas established democracies exhibit the least corruption; authoritarian regimes fall somewhere in between. Second, the presence of more women in parliament is correlated with lower levels of corruption, although the causality behind this correlation has never been demonstrated. Third, a great number of veto players makes it more difficult for officials to coordinate corrupt activities. Fourth, electoral system matters, and both proportional representation and majoritarian systems contain elements that stem corruption: in PR, large voting districts lower barriers to entry; in majoritarian systems, legislators are normally elected in districts

¹⁷Treisman, D. (2007). “What Have We Learned About the Causes of Corruption from Ten Years of Cross-National Empirical Research?” *The Annual Review of Political Science*, 10(1), 211-244.

and not as part of party lists, which increases the personal accountability of the legislator to his or her constituents.¹⁸

Rejecting each of these causes, Dahlstrom, Lapuente, and Teorell instead propose that bureaucratic factors provide the best explanations for corruption. They argue that Weberian bureaucracy has positive effects for good governance. “The Weberian bureaucratic ideal type contains a very large set of structural characteristics: a formalized, standardized, hierarchical, and specialized bureau with professional administrative staffs that enjoy merit-based, lifelong employment and organized careers.”¹⁹ But all of these elements are rarely present together; which of them need to be present in order to minimize the likelihood of corruption?

The authors note the three dominant bureaucratic explanations. First, that closed bureaucracies reduce corruption because they foster common values of public service among civil servants and enhance career stability. A second explanation is that well-paid bureaucracies reduce corruption because civil servants will not feel the need to supplement low incomes by seeking bribes and side payments. However, they present data that calls these two explanations into question. Rather, they propose that bureaucratic professionalization is the crucial element in reducing corruption. Bureaucratic professionalism consists of separating politicians and civil servants, through exclusively meritocratic recruitment and promotion. In doing so, politicians and civil servants become accountable to different constituencies: elected officials are accountable to their voters, while civil servants become accountable to each other and to the public as a whole, since they are judged not on political loyalties or their skill in providing favors, but on the performance of their jobs.²⁰

¹⁸Dahlstrom, C., Lapuente, V., & Teorell, J. (2012). “The Merit of Meritocratization: Politics, Bureaucracy, and the Institutional Deterrents of Corruption.” *Political Research Quarterly*, 65(3), 656-668.

¹⁹Dahlstrom, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012: 657-658.

²⁰Dahlstrom, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012.

Dahlstrom, Lapuente, and Teorell's findings accord with my own findings about Jordan's political system. Paying civil servants well, perhaps the most logical "solution" to corruption, would not likely have the effect of getting rid of *wasta* in Jordan since the benefits of *wasta* fall not primarily to the civil servant, but to the citizen recipient first and foremost. What the bureaucrat gains is a measure of influence, for which monetary compensation would not provide a logical substitute. Further, since the practice of *wasta* is so closely tied to the tribal system, well-paid civil servants would be just as likely to feel the pressure to provide benefits, and to acquiesce to this pressure. It is not impossible that higher pay would make civil servants feel more independent of their tribes or families, but because the incentives of *wasta* have little to do with their own personal compensation, it does not logically follow that higher income would change the practice of *wasta* within Jordan's civil service.

Likewise, creating a closed system would not guarantee a decrease in the use of *wasta* in Jordan. As Dahlstrom, Lapuente, and Teorell note, the "esprit de corps" that Weberians envision can also translate into "protecting one's own."²¹ Therefore, it can actually have the affect of shielding corrupt bureaucrats, or making one civil servant feel reluctant to report corrupt behavior because of the fear that doing so would "rock the boat" in such a tight-knit bureaucratic community. Many of my interviewees, especially the former auditor I cite in the previous chapter, make clear that the culture of *wasta* is pervasive in Jordan's bureaucracy. Getting a bureaucratic job is seen as difficult and attached to great prestige; if not, there would be no *wasta* influence associated with these jobs. There already exists a civil service exam, but the results of this exam (as with university placements and basically any other objective measure that the Jordanian government imposes) are less important than having a *wasta* advocate. Thus, the system is already, ostensibly, a closed one, but

²¹Dahlstrom, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012: 667.

one that still exhibits a high degree of *wasta* and corruption.

The lack of professionalization in Jordan's civil service, however, is the primary reason *wasta* is allowed to flourish. It is well known that civil servants in Jordan are not selected based on merit, and they are ordinarily not judged based on the performance of their jobs. The allocation of bureaucratic jobs are seen as a reward to important power groups (large tribes), not as a means of effectively and efficiently running the country. I do not have first-hand data to confirm that bureaucrats feel pressure from elected officials, but this is a common perception among Jordanians: if I need a hospital bed, for instance, I can go to my MP and he will put pressure on a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Health to make it happen. (This is not the only way *wasta* plays out, as I have noted, but it is the usual method when dealing with parliamentary *wasta*.)

Indeed, I noted in the previous chapter that the Jordanian government has made moves to encourage meritocratic promotion of bureaucrats. Mehdi Zoubi in the royal court outlined a three-tiered committee system for promotions, at least at the head of office level. Dahlstrom, Lapuente, and Teorell's findings suggest that this type of reform is a good one, and that meritocratic promotion should be expanded in the civil service. However, there is a caveat: in Zoubi's explanation, cabinet ministers formed the final committee in the promotion process. This could open the possibility for mixing of politics into the promotion process; however, the use of several committees, and the size of these committees, likely mitigates the possibility that one individual (or even several) could use the promotion as leverage to gain cooperation in corruption in the future (or to reward such cooperation in the past).

6.3.2 *Wasta* and Perceptions of Corruption

The effort to use data in order to examine cross-case variation in levels of corruption has attracted the efforts of both academic researchers and policymakers. As Treisman (2007) notes, the two primary data sets relating to corruption are the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (TI), and corruption rating published by the World Bank (WB). Both are highly correlated with each other, leading to the view among supporters that both must be really capturing the same phenomenon, that is, perceptions of corruption. According to both of these indices, corruption "is lower in economically developed, long-established liberal democracies, with a free and widely read press, a high share of women in government, and a history of openness to trade. It is higher in countries that depend on fuel exports or have intrusive business regulations and unpredictable inflation."²²

A significant problem Treisman identifies, however, is that surveys that ask respondents about their actual experiences of corruption yield different outcomes. Among the causes of corruption mentioned in the previous paragraph, these experience surveys show a correlation on only economic development and intrusive business relations once the model controls for income. Treisman asks whether indices of corruption perceptions and surveys of corruption experience might be capturing different types of corruption, or whether corruption perception measures are flawed. Definitions of corruption can vary from place to place, and perceptions of corruption could be based on hearsay and gossip, or on an overall cynicism about a government's effectiveness. "Cross-national differences could reflect differences in the socially encouraged level of cynicism, the degree of public identification with the government, and the perceived injustice of social or economic relations."²³ Further, since such indices normally include the assessments of Western experts and international

²²Treisman 2007: 212.

²³Treisman 2007: 215.

business representatives in a particular country, such indices might be skewed by Western ideas of what a corrupt (or clean) system ought to look like.²⁴

Treisman cites Razafindrakoto and Rouband (2005), who attempt to tackle the question of whether corruption perceptions correlate with experiences of corruption.²⁵ In their study they surveyed both citizens and experts across eight African countries. They found that experts expected far higher perceptions of corruption than what citizens reported experiencing in their daily lives. The expert ratings were, however, highly correlated with World Bank corruption data. “This might be taken as a sign that experts have a quite coherent set of beliefs about the incidence of corruption that bears little resemblance to realities on the ground.”²⁶

If perception does not equal reality when it comes to corruption, what might this mean for *wasta*, which is a similar concept? My interviews underscored the importance of understanding both perceptions and experience in order to better understand *wasta*’s effects. I asked each respondent to both define *wasta* and cite what it meant in their own lives. I discuss the results in detail in preceding chapters so I will not belabor them here, but I did find that individual experiences of *wasta* did not always tell me much about a respondent’s overall view of *wasta*. Every Jordanian I spoke to had an anecdote (or ten) about a time they had to use *wasta*, but these examples took many different forms. Some involved more traditional corruption, some involved interacting with local service providers or officials, some involved national-level figures. Attempting to rate Jordan’s level of *wasta* based on these examples seems unhelpful. Overall perceptions of *wasta* were actually

²⁴Treisman 2007.

²⁵Razafindrakoto, M. & Rouband, F. (2005). “How Far Can We Trust Expert Opinions on Corruption?: An Experiment Based on Surveys in Francophone Africa.” In *Global Corruption Report 2005*. Berlin: Transparency International, 292-295.

²⁶Treisman 2007: 217.

much more consistent, although I did not ask respondents to rate *wasta*'s pervasiveness on a scale or other quantitative measure. (Such a rating could be an avenue for future survey or qualitative research, however.)

All this is not to say that my research on *wasta* has not yielded generalizable findings, or that it would be impossible to accurately assess corruption across cases. However, the research on corruption could benefit greatly from additional qualitative research in order to check both the validity and reliability of research findings. It remains a question whether existing findings are actually capturing real information about corruption or whether perceptions (which may be prejudiced by pre-existing assumptions) are skewing the results. Qualitative data, such as interviews like the ones I conducted or the FADFED results, can help researchers better understand reliability as well, since they help clarify what respondents mean by corruption, *wasta*, abuse of office, or other concepts, which in turn makes it more likely researchers will be able to refine our concepts to ensure they are "on the same page" with the cases they study, which will lead to a greater likelihood of replicable results. The knowledge gained from such qualitative work can be used to create more precise surveys in order to generate better cross-case data.

6.4 Conclusion

The contributions of this dissertation extend beyond the case of Jordan and the concept of *wasta*. My work fits well into several strains of research in both the scholarly and policy spheres. The case of *wasta* in Jordan underscores the battle between elites and popular forces for change in the region, and suggests the tension between these forces will not likely fade completely. My findings also challenge some of the assumptions of the clientelism literature, adding knowledge about the ways that clientelism operates outside party systems. Finally, my work contributes to ongoing scholarly and policy conversations

on the study of the causes of corruption and the refining the methods which researchers use in order to measure corruption across cases.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?

7.1 Summary

I began this dissertation by introducing my sense that there is a marked gap between Jordanians and their leadership. Much of the gap is socioeconomic and cultural, owing to the fact that ministers and their deputies often come from privileged backgrounds, receive higher education, and have little accountability to Jordan's citizens, which leads them to sometimes appear to care little about what those citizens think. These elites spend most of their time in Amman, even if they represent other cities, and many of them reside in Amman's wealthier western neighborhoods, whose way of life barely resembles that of residents in the poorer eastern areas of the city (or, for that matter, much of the rest of the country). In many ways, Jordan's political leaders live in a different world than do their constituents.

I argue in this dissertation, however, that a large part of this gap can be explained by *wasta*. The ingrained system of *wasta* forces the attention of Jordan's citizens towards relatively small-picture issues, like earning favors or cutting red tape, rather than big-picture issues like the future of the Kingdom. It also pushes citizens toward their tribes, and the traditional status quo that these tribes represent. This preoccupation with mundane issues (and, to be fair, larger ones like getting into a university or getting a job) has led to the situation that citizens have little conception of themselves as political actors or

potential change-makers. Combined with an education system that does little to stimulate critical thinking, *wasta* has conditioned Jordanians to see themselves having little say in the decisions the government makes on their behalf.

Wasta plays another important, corrosive role. When people do, in fact, have the chance to interact with their government, such interactions are marked with roadblocks of various kinds. In bureaucratic matters, officials allow flaws to cause clogs in the system to ensure that people must rely on *wasta* to get things done, as I note in Chapter 5. The general perception is that the civil service administering the country's affairs is completely incompetent, which does little to foster a sense of public duty or citizenship. Further, any kind of legislative oversight of the executive branch is out of the question. As I note several times, Jordanians have come to look on members of parliament as "service deputies" whose role is to facilitate *wasta* for members of their tribes and networks. In interview after interview, young Jordanians expressed little confidence in their elected leaders, who they feel are not competent and do not care about the task of representing their interests.

Furthermore, the government's role at the center of the *wasta* system assures that it takes the blame for the unfairness and inefficiencies that the *wasta* system represents. When Jordanians see unqualified people getting jobs or other favors because of their *wasta* connections, they point to the government from which these favors come. As I note in Chapter 4, even those who oppose using *wasta* rather than merit are often forced to capitulate in order to survive. Tribes get the benefit of prestige when they can "come through" for their members, but the government gets no benefit, because the very need for such cutting of red tape or skirting of rules makes the government look incompetent, as I note several times above.

Finally, *wasta* causes divisions among Jordanians themselves. In addition to its effect of causing resentments among those who do and do not have access to *wasta* (at a

given time) or who have more or less *wasta* in the aggregate, *wasta* plays an important role in undermining Jordanian national unity. Jordan's sizable (almost certainly majority) Palestinian-Jordanian population is largely excluded from the *wasta* system due to their exclusion from the majority of government posts, almost all army positions, and the entirety of the intelligence service. Thus, the ways that East Bank Jordanians and Palestinian Jordanians relate to their governments, and vice versa, are completely different. In addition to their lack of presence in the executive branch, Palestinians are systematically under-represented in the legislature as well. Recent changes to Jordan's electoral law may improve this situation, but many Jordanians I spoke to argued the opposite: that it would further consolidate the disproportionately high numbers of East Bank deputies.

Thus, the variety of reforms that I have noted may or may not actually make a difference in improving integrity, transparency, and fairness in Jordan's governance. It remains to be seen whether these reforms are merely window dressing; even if sincere intentions are behind them, however, those who would lose out in any change of the status quo (especially the tribes) could co-opt such reforms or otherwise find a way to use them to their advantage. Only time will tell. Even the most optimistic promoters of reform, like Mehdi Zoubi at the royal court, admit that it will take sustained, tangible successes for a skeptical public to believe that reform is actually happening, and to embrace it and adjust their behavior and expectations to it.

These behaviors and expectations, as they develop in the short term, could speak volumes about Jordan's trajectory well into the future. If they change little, and Jordan continues to experience significant political and economic challenges, a particularly large shock could cause social strife and significant instability. While this would almost certainly not bring down the King or the monarchy, some sources speculate that during the Arab Spring some factions of the royal family considered replacing King Abdullah. A more

significant wave of protest, motivated by desperation over jobs, rising prices, or a myriad of other stresses, could lead to these questions arising again. Such developments would certainly lead to the sacking of the prime minister and cabinet, and could lead to enhancements to security and censorship that derail any potential reform progress that may have occurred to that point. On the other hand, if Jordanians become convinced of reform at the top and stop expecting, or demanding, access to favors via *wasta*, this behavior could contribute to the consolidation of a more competent, accountable, and transparent legislature and civil service, which could lead to massive change in Jordan's political culture. Jordanians would have a stronger voice in their affairs and the future, and thus would have less incentive to resort to contentious activities in the face of serious challenges.

7.2 Moving Forward

In addition to enhancing knowledge about *wasta* and how *wasta* impacts the Jordanian political system, this dissertation project has made several contributions to the theoretical literature, as I note in Chapter 2 and the previous chapter. This project highlights the importance of taking citizens and politics seriously in the study of *wasta*. More broadly, in the study of clientelism, it points to the need to consider client demands in addition to patron strategy, along with some recent scholarship on African clientelism; it also suggests the need to consider political organizations other than parties (i.e., tribes) as providers or conduits of clientelism. It neatly complements important work the World Bank has undertaken in the past year that examines *wasta*'s role in the sub-optimal social service provision in the Middle East and North Africa. This project also helps researchers to better understand the role that perceptions play in the study of corruption.

Interview-based research proved very successful in studying the connections between *wasta* and politics in Jordan. From a qualitative perspective, the findings provided rich

description and helped to establish the causal links that the Arab Barometer survey data suggested. The addition of FADFED data provided some qualitative and quantitative support, allowing me access to an expanded sample of respondents who wrote open-ended answers. From this experience, I propose two paths forward for research into *wasta* and politics: ethnography and survey research.

Interview data can provide a great deal of detail, but my sessions with respondents were limited (they lasted around an hour each) and they did not address the causal connections between attitudes on *wasta* and politics in the deepest way possible. An ethnography, for instance of one tribe or part of a tribe, could allow a researcher to examine in depth the practice of *wasta* on a daily basis, as it happens. Through interviews alone, for example, I do not have the ability to see the actual process of obtaining *wasta*, or to observe the patterns of who gets *wasta* and who does not. My research was also somewhat limited geographically; my respondents came from different parts of Jordan, but almost all were living in Amman when I interviewed them. The dynamics of having someone to introduce me, and building trust with interviewees, simply did not allow me to reach deeply into other parts of Jordan where I did not have contacts. Some of Jordan's tribes are regionally-based, and some are large and have a presence in multiple areas. In either case, it would be possible to ascertain the views of Jordanians who neither come from Amman nor have the resources to move their to study or work.

Ethnography would deal with another limitation of this present project: the potential for selection bias and social desirability bias in a respondent pool. Because I could not sample randomly, it is possible that my interviewees were more disposed to complain about *wasta* than the average Jordanian, or that they held some other non-representative views. It is also possible they told me what they thought I wanted to hear as a Western researcher. (As I note in earlier chapters, I think there is reason to doubt a significant amount of bias,

but it would be impossible to rule it out.) An ethnography would allow a researcher to thoroughly observe actual behaviors, attitudes, and expectations toward *wasta* and the political system as they truly play out in a particular tribe or group. True, these particular observations would also not be randomly sampled, and hence generalization would require caveats (as in this dissertation project), but such ethnographic work could confirm (or call into question) the causal processes I identify using interviews and FADFED data.

If ethnography would allow for even more fine-grained detail, a survey encompassing multiple countries would make generalization more possible. I use Arab Barometer data in Chapter 3, but a survey specific to issues of *wasta* would be beneficial. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the Arab Barometer contains a single question on *wasta*, and that question is not terribly conducive to the questions this line of research would like to ask. (In other words, we are interested in not the amount of *wasta*, but how respondents make value judgments regarding the existence and use of *wasta*.) A survey of the Arab world focused on *wasta* and political issues could contain questions tailored to different political arrangements found in the Arab world. For instance, in much of the Gulf, tying *wasta* to a parliament makes little sense because parliament is unelected or non-existent in the first place. In a country like Egypt, *wasta* is present despite the complete absence of tribe as a source of identity and cultural practices.

In the broader sense, of course, using a survey leads to more generalizable results. Thus, a multi-country survey on *wasta* in the Arab world would advance our understanding of the ways *wasta* works as a concept specific to the Middle East. If carefully designed, it could also permit comparison with findings on clientelism and corruption in other areas of the world; while *wasta* has some specific attributes, the idea of using influence to bring about personal benefit is hardly limited to the Arab world. As an example, in the US county in which I was born (Luzerne County, Pennsylvania), just over five years ago a total of nearly

fifty officials were convicted of nepotism, influence peddling, and other forms of corruption after a large-scale FBI investigation. One need not look far from home to find human motivations for favoritism and patronage!

7.3 Closing Thoughts

Therefore, this dissertation project has planted the seeds for future avenues of research. Through quantitative evidence, interviews, and FADFED data, I have established a firm connection between attitudes on *wasta* and attitudes on political life in Jordan. By giving voice to Jordanian citizens on this topic, this dissertation provides a foundation for future public opinion and ethnographic work on a topic crucial to the political future of Jordan and the rest of the Arab world. It draws attention to the challenge of connecting citizens and their leaders, and of meeting the needs and desires of those citizens in a sustainable way.

Jordan's political situation remains precarious, and its challenges diverse and significant. The Kingdom's future in the five-to-ten year window depends greatly on the ways that its elected leaders respond to these challenges; however, they cannot lose sight of the popular discontent of the past five years. If Jordan's leaders cannot find a way to reduce *wasta* and allow the Kingdom's citizens a greater say in their politics and their future, a large economic or security shock, or accumulated economic pressures, could spark a return to protests and conflict that the government would find difficult to control. If such a turn of events took place, Jordan's situation in the immediate aftermath would be impossible to predict. Far better to make difficult decisions now that will rob some traditional power bases of their influence, but which could wind up preserving the Kingdom's stability and security over the long term.

Chapter 8

Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Non-Elite Interview Questions

NB: Interviews were semi-structured. All the following questions/topics were addressed, but not necessarily in the given order or using the precise phrasing. Additionally, interviews sometimes moved conversationally onto topics not covered in the list of questions below.

Demographic

Age

East Bank or Palestinian

Gender

Political System

What is the role of government in your life? The parliament?

How is the role of your tribe in how you relate to the government?

Do you feel you have an impact on politics and the running of the Kingdom?

In five years, will Jordan's situation be better or worse than today? Why?

What are the biggest challenges facing Jordan right now?

To what extent do you believe the government can/will address these challenges?

Voting

There's a lot of debate about whether voting matters in Jordan. Do you consider voting important for participating in politics?

Do many people you know vote?

Wasta

How do you define "*wasta*?"

What role does *wasta* play in your life?

Is there such a thing as "good *wasta*" and "bad *wasta*?"

Is *wasta* the same as corruption?

Does *wasta* impact how you view politics and the government? Does it affect how you vote?

Do you feel that you view *wasta* differently from those older or younger than yourself?

Are attitudes on *wasta* changing or staying the same?

Does *wasta* impact your view of yourself as Jordanian/from a tribe/Palestinian?

Protest

Why do you think people protest in Jordan?

Has anyone you know participated in a protest? Why?

Do you feel that protest is an effective way of addressing problems in the Kingdom?

Political Reform

Does Jordan need political reform? What would that reform look like?

What is the role of democracy in Jordan?

Some people suggest Jordan needs a parliament dominated by parties and national interests. What do you think of this idea?

8.2 Appendix B: Index of Elite and Non-Elite Interviews

NB: Following standard practice (see, for example, Cammett 2014) and the terms of my IRB protocol, non-elite interview subjects are identified only by certain features. Elite interview subjects are identified by name, with the exception of a Western diplomat who spoke on background.

Non-Elite Interviews

Palestinian Female – March 22, 2015

Palestinian Female – March 30, 2015

East Bank Male – March 30, 2015

Palestinian Male – April 1, 2015

Palestinian Female – April 4, 2015

East Bank Male – April 7, 2015

East Bank Male – April 7, 2015

Palestinian Female – April 14, 2015

Palestinian Female – April 15, 2015

Palestinian Female – April 15, 2015

Palestinian Female – April 15, 2015

East Bank Male – April 15, 2015

Palestinian Female – April 21, 2015

East Bank Female – April 23, 2015

East Bank Female – April 23, 2015

East Bank Female – April 23, 2015

Palestinian Female – April 23, 2015

East Bank Male – April 25, 2015

East Bank Male – April 25, 2015

East Bank Female – April 27, 2015

East Bank Male – April 28, 2015

Palestinian Male – April 28, 2015

Palestinian Male – April 28, 2015

East Bank Female – May 7, 2015

East Bank Female – May 12, 2015

East Bank Male – May 12, 2015

Palestinian Male – May 12, 2015

Palestinian Female – May 25, 2015

East Bank Male – May 30, 2015

Palestinian Male – June 2, 2015

Palestinian Male – August 5, 2015

Palestinian Female – August 6, 2015

Palestinian Male Activist – August 18, 2015

Palestinian Male Activist – September 14, 2015

Palestinian Male Activist – September 14, 2015

East Bank Male – November 20, 2015 (in the United States)

Elite Interviews

Dr. Sami Hourani – March 18, 2015 (Founder, Leaders of Tomorrow)

Dr. Moayed al-Windawi – March 25, 2015 (Adviser, United Nations)

Alain McNamara – May 19, 2015 (Director, bi-national Fulbright commission in Jordan)

Mehdi Zoubi – June 1, 2015 (Manager of Domestic Political Affairs, Office of His Majesty, The Royal Hashemite Court)

Lian Saifi – June 1, 2015 (Leaders of Tomorrow)

Ra'ad Al-Obeidat – June 5, 2015 (Iraqi-Jordanian business owner)

Dr. Lucine Taminian – June 9, 2015 (Political researcher)

Omar Al-Abdallat – August 5, 2015 (prominent political cartoonist and commentator)

Dr. Aida Essaid – August 17, 2015 (Director, Information and Research Center, King Hussein Foundation)

Western Diplomat – September 4, 2015

8.3 Appendix C: Index of Arab Barometer Questions Used

NB: Questions are given below as they were asked. Information on re-coding of certain responses is found in Chapter 3.

Q 202: “In your opinion, is the state currently undertaking far-reaching and radical reforms and changes in its institutions and agencies?” Responses: Yes, definitely; Yes; No; No, definitely not; I don’t know; Declined to answer.

Q 203.2: “Generally speaking, how would you rate the performance of the parliament in carrying out its tasks and duties?” Responses: Very Bad, Bad, Neither Good nor Bad, Good, Very Good, I don’t know, Declined to answer

Q 210: “Do you think that there is corruption within the state’s institutions and agencies?” Responses: Yes, No, I don’t know, Declined to answer.

Q 210a: “Do you think that corruption in state institutions is now...” Responses: More than what it was two years ago, The same as it was two years ago, Less than it was two years ago, I don’t know, Declined to answer.

Q 213: “Some people say that nowadays it is impossible to obtain a job without connections, while others say that jobs are only available to qualified candidates. Based on recent experience (or experiences) you are personally aware of, do you think that...” Responses: Obtaining an employment through connections is extremely widespread, Employment is sometimes obtained through connections, Employment is obtained without connections, I don’t know, Declined to answer.

Q 301: “Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections that were held on (date of last elections)?” Responses: Yes, No, I don’t know, Declined to answer.

Q 404: “In general, to what extent are you interested in politics?” Responses: Very interested, Interested, Slightly interested, Not interested, I don’t know, Declined to answer.

Q 1001: Age

Q 1002: Gender

Q 1003: Level of education: Illiterate/No formal education, Elementary, Preparatory/Basic, Secondary, Mid-level diploma/professional or technical, BA, MA and above, Declined to answer.

Q 1005: Are you: Retired, A housewife, A student, Unemployed, Other.

Q 1006a: Economic/work sector: Public, Private, Other.

Q 1014: Income including all wages, salaries, and rent allowances.

Q 1020jo: Country of origin: Jordanian, Palestinian, Other. (Asked only in Jordan.)

8.4 Appendix D: Description of Arab Barometer Variables Used

8.4.1 Arab Barometer Third Wave

NB: Descriptives given for Country = Jordan

Table 8.1: POLINTEREST

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not interested	554	30.86
Slightly interested	558	31.09
Interested	481	26.80
Very interested	197	10.97
Total	1790	99.72
Missing	5	0.28

Table 8.2: PARLEFFECTIVE

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very bad	316	17.60
Bad	419	23.34
Neither good nor bad	382	21.28
Good	487	27.13
Very good	129	7.19
Total	1733	96.55
Missing	62	3.45

Table 8.3: REFORM

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	132	7.35
Disagree	363	20.22
Agree	974	54.26
Strongly Agree	265	14.76
Total	1734	96.60
Missing	61	3.40

Table 8.4: NEED *wasta*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Jobs can be obtained without <i>wasta</i>	63	3.5
Jobs are sometimes obtained using <i>wasta</i>	400	22.28
The use of <i>wasta</i> to get a job is widespread	1265	70.47
Total	1728	96.27
Missing	67	3.73

Table 8.5: VOTED

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	773	43.06
Yes	1015	56.55
Total	1788	99.61
Missing	7	0.39

Table 8.6: MALE

Response	Frequency	Percent
Female	896	49.92
Male	899	50.08
Total	1795	100.00

Table 8.7: UNEMPLOYED

Response	Frequency	Percent
Employed	916	51.03
Unemployed	160	8.91
Total	1076	59.94
Missing	719	40.06

Table 8.8: PUBLIC SECTOR

Response	Frequency	Percent
Private sector	429	23.90
Public sector	283	15.77
Total	712	39.67
Missing	1083	60.33

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